THE RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

TOWARDS A REASSESSMENT

JONATHAN SUTTON

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Jonathan Sutton
Campaign Officer
'Scientists for the Release of Soviet Refuseniks'

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To the memory of
Ananda Coomaraswamy
(1877–1947)

Contents

Preface viii

Acknowledgements xii

Author's Note xv

1 The Study of Mystical Thought – Methodology 1

2 The Life and Career of Vladimir Solovyov 16

3 Tradition, Scholarship and Practical Wisdom 28

4 The Central Teachings of Solovyov – I 39

5 The Central Teachings of Solovyov – II 51

6 Justification of the Good: Goal and Precept 87

7 Scripture and Reason: A Dual Allegiance 130

8 Solovyov's Conception of Christian Culture 141

9 A Vision of Conflict and Decline 159

Conclusion 179

Appendix I: Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov 185

Appendix II: Solovyov's Poem 'Panmongolism' 194

Notes 195

A List of Vladimir Solovyov's Books and Articles Examined or Referred to in This Study 225

Select Bibliography 228

Index 240

Preface

In Autumn 1891 the philosopher and poet Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov addressed a meeting of the Moscow Psychological Society, and delivered a lecture that caused a considerable scandal in educated Russian society and particularly in government circles. A correspondent for the British newspaper the *Daily News*, whose account was published on 5 November 1891, reported a very mixed reception to the lecture: great enthusiasm on the part of some listeners and dismayed anger on the part of the Orthodox press. The authorities even considered taking action against Solovyov for this expression of his views. Already subject to several years of censorship by the state and the Church, he made relatively few appearances as a lecturer during the last decade of his life, between 1890 and 1900. On this occasion, though, the impact that he caused was enormous, for he argued that Christianity entailed an actual transformation of society and social relations, and that it might be liberal, reform-minded non-believers who are truer to the Christian spirit than nominal Christians who fail to assist the betterment of society.

It required considerable independence of mind openly to put forward such a view in a country whose government regarded itself as the rightful guardian of Christian truth and values. The lecture I mention is important for an understanding of the way Solovyov viewed Christian culture (see Chapter 8). It also illustrates his capacity for looking at familiar beliefs from a fresh and often unexpected angle. The perspective on Christian faith offered in Solovyov's philosophical works is little known in the English-speaking world. It is probably true that the writings of Nikolai A. Berdyaev (1874–1948) are more widely known and influential than those of Solovyov, depite the fact that Berdyaev readily acknowledged how indebted he was to him and encouraged his own readers to acquaint themselves properly with the works and spirituality of his predecessor.

The personal character of Vladimir Solovyov was complex, and included elements of saintliness and eccentricity. His works *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* and *The Drama of Plato's Life* seem to me to be very personal statements of his beliefs, but others describe

Solovyov as a particularly reticent man, whose impersonal prose served as a *mask* to hide his real persona. Nicolas Zernov, author of *Three Russian Prophets: Khomiakov, Dostoevsky, Soloviev*, spoke of this philosopher as embodying a rare combination of Intellect and Eros. There were also striking incongruities in Solovyov's circumstances: despite the fact that he was at heart a convinced monarchist, he managed to arouse the suspicions and anger of the Tsar and Holy Synod by advocating truly theocratic government. Also, seemingly close in spirit to the Slavophiles in the early years of his career, Solovyov deeply offended them on two counts: through his genuine admiration for their arch-enemy Peter the Great, and through his increasing openness to Roman Catholicism. His eventual isolation from the Slavophile camp and from numerous other former colleagues and sympathisers became so great that it prompted him, in a letter, to quote the line from Lermontov's bitter poem *'Gratitude'*, which gives thanks for 'the vengeance of enemies and the slander of friends'.

There are many facets to the philosophy of Solovyov. Attempts to characterise his thought have led to comparisons with figures as various as Origen, St. Augustine, Cardinal Newman, Tolstoy, Friedrich von Huegel and, more recently, with Max Scheler and Teilhard de Chardin. I would add that – in his reflections upon evil and certain other preoccupations – a comparison with Hannah Arendt is justified. I accept the worth of many previous works on Solovyov, and recognise that certain scholars have covered very wide ground in their investigations, notably Mochulsky, Radlov, Sergey Solovyov, Stremoukhov and Trubetskoy. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to undertake new reassessments of Solovyov and his writings on religion. It is quite natural that anyone embarking on such a study would view Solovyov from a different perspective, given that fifty years have passed since the last of those five scholars published their work. Konstantin Mochulsky's critical biography appeared in 1936 and remains among the very best sources. Ernest Radlov and Prince Evgeniy Trubetskoy published their respective works as early as 1913, little more than a decade after the philosopher's death. Their writings clearly gain from the author's direct personal contact with Solovyov and from an immediate appreciation of the time and circumstances in which he worked. New studies, undertaken now, stand to gain from the large body of literature available on the subject, including the important contributions of the above-mentioned authors.

Far-reaching historical and cultural changes must also alter our view of the philosopher's goals and achievements: the period between his death and our own time has seen the systematic imposition of a militantly atheist ideology on the Russian people that has lasted for two generations; increasing secularisation in the West; the Holocaust; the division of Europe; an era of fundamental reform in the Roman Catholic Church, initiated by Pope John XXIII; the coronation in 1978 of a Polish citizen as Catholic Pope (which would be very likely to have pleased Solovyov greatly); and the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism as a potent force at the centre of international politics since the late 1970s. On the positive side one may say that the hopes for reconciliation between the Russian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches (and the good will necessary to bring it about) appear stronger and more widespread now than in Solovyov's time, thus making his work for that goal a relevant and early contribution.

It is also to be hoped that the more rapid and extensive exchange of ideas possible today will provide not Babel, but the basis for a generally freer, more frank and tolerant discussion of religious views and practice. Solovyov himself urged his readers to adopt a more tolerant, more truly 'Christian' attitude towards the Jewish people. Our extension of that principle to include other non-Christian peoples too would help create an atmosphere conducive to balanced study of religions, and to well-founded research in the field rather than the simple reinforcing of cultural and other prejudices.

Another factor that is bound to affect the most recent studies of Solovyov's work is the emergence and growth of comparative religious studies as a discipline. Even if not all studies of his work are conceived in terms of cross-cultural, cross-religious comparisons, the climate in which this new discipline has arisen must make itself felt by those concerned with the phenomenon 'religion'. Fears are sometimes expressed that scholars who commend the comparative approach would in time surrender their own beliefs, and that in the attempt to find what common ground exists between the world's religions they would reduce religion to the 'lowest common denominator' of these various and rich creeds. (Solovyov himself foresaw this danger, stating that this reduction of religions precisely to that 'lowest common denominator' leads people of a consistent mind to complete atheism. He was therefore anxious to establish the distinctive 'positive content' of the Christian religion.) The temptation to diminish the content of specific

religions in this way (or to equate religion too easily with utopian political creeds) will never be entirely eliminated, and it would be unrealistic to expect otherwise. However, it seems to me that the comparative approach to the study of religions may actually *promote* awareness of the methodological difficulties to be encountered in describing or classifying religions. This attention to methodology, and the efforts of scholars to provide an increasingly refined terminology for use in this field, should greatly assist specialists on Solovyov's works, as also his other modern readers.

Vladimir Solovyov was concerned with Tradition, scholarship and practical wisdom in virtually equal measure. The extent of his learning was quite indisputable, but he refused to take that as a goal in itself. He belongs, first and foremost, to the long Russian tradition of *bogoiskateli* or 'God-seekers'.

I present an account of his central teachings which, I would like to think, is faithful in spirit and also clear to readers unfamiliar with this range of ideas. I cannot claim to add new insights regarding Solovyov's treatment of the Divine Sophia, and believe this subject has already received extensive examination. I also leave to others more competent than myself questions related to the aesthetics of the poets Andrey Bely and Alexander Blok and the extent of their debt to Solovyov. While an appreciation of Dostoevsky's spirituality is, clearly, pertinent to the study of Solovyov's religious philosophy, a full treatment of what I take to be their mutual influence upon one another would occupy a disproportionate part of my attempted reassessment. However, the reader may find it useful to refer to the text of a short paper in which I compare Dostoevsky and Solovyov, and this is included as an Appendix to my study. It was written for, and first delivered at, the VI Symposium of the International Dostoevsky Society, convened at the University of Nottingham in August 1986.

As far as I have been able to understand from Solovyov's life and writings, attempts to portray him as a world-renouncing philosopher are misconceived. *Transformation* of the imperfect world-order seemed to him to be the message in the Gospels, not flight or renunciation. I have therefore taken it as necessary to examine in detail Solovyov's understanding of contemplative spirituality, active spirituality and quietism. Implicit in my whole consideration of these is an *enquiry into values*, an enquiry inspired not only by Solovyov, but also by Ananda Coomaraswamy.

London J.S.

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Very crucial indeed to the completion of this study have been the encouragement and friendship given me by the late Dr Nicolas Zernov, D. D., of Keble College, Oxford, and former Spalding Lecturer in Eastern Orthodox Studies. Dr Zernov, author of *Three Russian Prophets: Khomiakov, Dostoevsky, Soloviev* (1944), not only read some of my early articles on Solovyov and advised me on them, but also introduced me to the Russian Orthodox Tradition and provided my first direct contact with the Russian Orthodox Church in Britain. My own observations on Dostoevsky and Solovyov (see Appendix I) are dedicated to the memory of Dr Zernov.

Much recent help and encouraging advice have been given me by Professor Charles Drage, who lectures at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, and I am most grateful to him. I would also like to thank Dr Alexander Piatigorsky of the School of Oriental and African Studies (London) for the guidance he has given me on various occasions and for the stimulating quality of his lectures on Buddhism that I have attended. It is difficult to convey the extent of my gratitude for the help and important guidance given me by Dr Karel Werner, Spalding Lecturer in Indian Philosophy and Religion at the University of Durham. I value his lectures that I have attended, and also the opportunity to participate in the Symposia on Indian Religions formerly convened by him each year at Oxford and elsewhere. Dr Werner has read most of my work in draft form and has given me very extensive advice on its content and presentation. In both tangible and intangible ways, he has substantially deepened my knowledge of religious thought and experience.

I thank my own family for all their support, which they have shown in many valuable ways. Among members of my family, Ursula Fleming deserves special mention for introducing me to the writings of the contemplatives whose insights I have come to value. I have already expressed my gratitude to her in the pages of my doctoral thesis.

Before expressing my special gratitude to my wife, Rebecca, I would like briefly to mention my godchild Luke Valentine, who

will, I trust, grow to value personal freedom and the paths which lead to it. Rebecca, my wife, has helped greatly in compilation of the index for this book, in reading and advising, and this has been of enormous value. Above all, she has helped me by the example of her own integrity.

J.S.

Author's Note

The philosopher's family name has been spelt in various ways, Solovyov, Soloviev, and Solov'ev being the most common forms. I have used the most widely accepted spelling, that is, Solovyov. However, where I cite critical works that give an alternative form, I use the spelling provided in those works.

The translations of passages from Vladimir Solovyov's Collected Works are my own. Some of the works that I analyse have been translated from Russian, and I provide details of existing English, German and French translations in my Select Bibliography.

'. . . Freedom is not strictly the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action.'

(Iris Murdoch, from *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970), three papers on moral philosophy)

1

The Study of Mystical Thought – Methodology

A considerable number of problematic issues beset any attempt to examine the writings of a religious philosopher with an acknowledged reputation as a 'mystic' or in whose works and thought 'mystical apprehension' is assigned a central or at least prominent function.

Especially over the past fifteen or twenty years it has been the case that fashionable interest in the subject of mysticism has created a climate of thought in which it seems acceptable to investigate 'mystical' ideas and teachings without submitting oneself to the disciplines they properly entail, or else to appropriate random ideas and terminology from mysticism for more or less irresponsible use in other, obviously secular, contexts. The effects of this contemporary phenomenon are sufficiently wide-spread to cause general concern, but if one addresses oneself just to the matter of investigating one or other aspect of mysticism, one thing is clear. A serious result of this extensive misapplication of non-secular ideas is that a host of unfortunate associations now attaches to them, and this aggravates the difficulties already inherent in any attempt to delineate the nature and true levels of reference that belong to the terms we employ.

A proper awareness of the scope and the various degrees of intentional or unwitting distortion that are possible here will induce anyone investigating the subject to exercise the very greatest caution and discernment with regard to all his materials. The temptation wholly to withdraw from this area of investigation will be considerable, and the arguments in favour of such withdrawal are persuasive and not without substance.

A close reading of the relevant literature can leave one in no doubt that the spiritual endeavour is highly exacting – as a discipline and as a science (in the sense of *Wissenschaft*). Writers who treat the heart of mystical experience tend to be starkly realistic

when they mention the difficulties to be encountered prior to attainment of any beatific or grace-given perception of 'the Real'.

My purpose is to examine the religious philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) and to work towards a reassessment of the contribution he made in this field. However, first a number of general considerations require mention. In his writings Solovyov sought to delineate a 'traditional' conception of the world founded upon the truths of Christian revelation, a conception that, for him, also accorded with the insights offered by individual philosophers. This was a particularly ambitious endeavour, for Solovyov intended to present a coherent, tradition-based survey of the whole range of man's relations. Distinctly different from the more limited tasks which twentieth-century philosophers and theologians tend to set themselves, Solovyov's assumed task was to put forward an entire cosmology. I shall need to refer later to 'a tradition-based cosmology' or 'traditional cosmology', and it needs to be emphasized that, throughout this study, such references rest upon an understanding that all cosmological accounts of our world, its origins and of man's place in it which may be characterized adequate or duly comprehensive are intimately linked with an *ideal of spiritual attainment* (see Chapter 3).

Other areas of preliminary discussion are these:

1. the experiential basis of our subject matter;
2. spirituality and motivation;
3. the question whether or not certain philosophical accounts of our experience and knowledge are soteriological;
4. the question regarding the deficiencies of language which make adequate description of mystical experience notoriously difficult.

* * *

1 THE EXPERIENTIAL BASIS OF OUR SUBJECT MATTER

In one sense, all writings which record direct perceptions of the Divine and the Real are closed to anyone who has been denied those same perceptions and who, consequently, has no means whereby he can verify for himself what is treated in such writings.[1] Their basis is experiential.

However, awareness of this difficulty does not oblige one entirely to forego concern with this order of perceptions.

If we consider that, in the Christian Tradition, all perceptions and experiences of the believer are 'tested' by reference to Christ's experiences (recorded in the Gospels) and are 'validated' or 'verified' in terms of greater or lesser conformity to those experiences, this procedure still allows the believer to continue in his or her quest, regardless of how low the actual level of attainment and understanding. The Christian Tradition allows one to speak quite legitimately of a 'Via Crucis' even in the case of those not very far advanced in spiritual understanding, and such references do not in the least degree distort or debase Christ's original experiences, nor deprive them of their spiritual import.

2 SPIRITUALITY AND MOTIVATION

The motives which underlie the believer's or spiritual aspirant's submission to a discipline or course of studies may be varied and complex. Indeed, it is likely that not all of those motives will be apparent to the aspirant himself at the time he chooses to take up his discipline. Since spiritual training comprises an ascetic element (Gk. *askēsis* = training), the aspirant will be required closely to examine the purity of his motives as part of a more general purificatory stage of training, described in the literature on the subject as the initial stage, the *Via Purgativa*, which must precede any progress in the subsequent stages, the *Via Illuminativa* and *Via Unitiva*.

First and foremost, it is clear that the aspirant would not be permitted to pursue his training towards the later stages if it were found that his main thought was to evade the problems of secular life. His spiritual adviser would be obliged to warn him that his training, if pursued with the appropriate degree of commitment, would entail problems and difficulties substantially greater than those he might encounter in the secular world. He would impress upon the aspirant that the order of attainments for which the discipline is specifically designed requires – inavoidably – a moral preparation. In his book *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism* C. A. Bennett assigns particular importance to this element of spiritual training. Noting that the mystic's endeavour should not be viewed

too exclusively in terms of restoring health to a sick man, Bennett writes

> The mystic does not think of God as physician, for he is undertaking to *earn* the solution of his problems, so far as that is possible . . . We miss the essence of the mystics' preparation unless we see that it is a *moral* preparation[2] (Author's italics)

As do other writers on the subject, Bennett establishes the connection between this form of preparation and the capacity to perceive reality:

> [The mystic's] long and arduous spiritual journey has its origin in the perception that if reality seems evil, this is caused not by anything in the nature of things themselves, but by some defect in the mystic's vision. What work there is to be done must be done on his own soul, for it is his soul which excludes him from the vision of reality as divine.[3]

And further, the mystic

> endeavours to clarify his vision not that he may escape the discomforts of blindness or defective vision, but in order to see reality as it truly is.[4]

The themes of moral preparation and the capacity to perceive reality are central to Solovyov's philosophy, as subsequent chapters will show.

Another important instance of impure motivation that may in one or other way hinder the aspirant is this: a too exclusive concern with *acquiring merit*. (Such concern may arise from a combination of petitionary prayer and a sense that one has conscientiously performed all the religious duties required of one). An undue concern with *acquiring* merit colours numerous defective accounts of the spiritual life, and it seems also to prevail quite widely when discussion of religion arises among secular laity. The tendency to associate religious practice specifically with the acquisition of merit is, surely, reinforced by a number of factors. Prominent among these is the supposition that rigorous performance of one's *'duty'* (however conceived, whatever the form it may take) somehow *ensures* recognition of virtuous behaviour and the consequent

award of spiritual 'merit'. The recognition sought is, in most cases, almost immediate recognition. Those who hold to this view of matters appear to have overlooked the very explicit warnings in the Christian Gospels about observing only the 'letter' of the law, not the 'spirit' in which religious duties were intended to be performed. The possibility of becoming acquisitive with regard to merit (or, indeed, with regard to spiritual wisdom) is very real. One corrective to this is to be found particularly in the Indian spiritual literature, which provides a wealth of references to the dangers inherent in seeking or becoming attached to the *fruits* of one's actions. Numerous European students of this spiritual Tradition have been too ready to dismiss these references as the quietist's call to 'inaction', whereas they were intended to remind the aspirant of the caution and discernment necessary for a 'disinterested' recognition of 'the Real'.

It is greatly to be regretted that the *ideal of detachment* tends to be equated, in many people's minds, with indifference and inaction, though in its proper application this ideal promotes neither of these. I shall return to this point in my subsequent discussion of contemplation and action.

* * *

The centrally important text which the committed Christian aspires to honour through his practice is to be found in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, 2, 20

> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless
> I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

This text from the New Testament provides, in the first place, a succinct affirmation of the wholly Christocentric viewpoint. Secondly, it represents a summit of attainment in the task of self-transcendence. Thirdly, this dictum inspired the whole theology of 'poverty of spirit' that animated the monastic ideal in the Catholic and Orthodox worlds, and, in turn, the ideal of the secular laity.

In the Leclercq, Vandenbrouke, Bouyer *History of Christian Spirituality*, François Vandenbrouke writes of the ideal of actual

poverty that the Franciscan and Dominican orders reaffirmed in the thirteenth century, and of the subsequent change of emphasis in spirituality when Germany and the Netherlands became new centres for the interpretation of Christian teaching.

> The shift of the spiritual centre towards the Germanic regions was paralleled by a change in the problem under discussion: what was at issue was no longer poverty, but contemplation. The problem was to know what constituted its essential element, how to define it, and so to determine in practice how to obtain it. In one sense poverty was involved in this debate. Eckhart and his disciples continued to preach the necessity of detachment as a basis for the return to the image of God; they even did so with some intransigence. But in fact this was something different from Franciscan poverty; what they had in mind was an interior condition rather than an external realization, though the latter was not excluded.[5]

Vandenbrouke's observations serve as a very useful reminder that contemplation and concern with the believer's interior condition were *central* to Christian thought in critical periods of its growth and development. These matters were not, as is too often supposed, solely the province of a numerically small group of elect souls, divorced from the large and mostly unenlightened body of religious and laity.

My own understanding of religious philosophy accords with the belief that contemplation has always had, and rightly has, a centrally important part to play in spiritual life. There may have been considerable periods of time when that importance was obscured, but this does not, ultimately, diminish the extent to which contemplation is operative and, indeed, efficacious.

Contemplation and action are to be taken together, for their relationship is a reciprocal one.[6] The person who chooses to take up the contemplative life need not lose sight of the fact that there are times and circumstances when action is the appropriate response. Far from taking contemplation and action to be mutually exclusive, the contemplative can be acutely aware of the imperative to *act*, and he founds his own practice upon the principle that his contemplation is actually the *source* of the most efficacious action and help. The radical reorientation (Gk. *metanoia*) of values and way of life, which ascesis entails, affords the aspirant a freer kind of response

than could be available to the person who, though generally benevolent and prepared to act, has motives that are still to some degree self-referrant.

3 SOTERIOLOGY

For the purposes of correct methodology, it is necessary to draw attention to a distinction that sets apart soteriological from other accounts of experience and knowledge.

An account of human experience and knowledge is said to be 'soteriological' if it is 'conducive to salvation'. If the adoption of that account or scheme, and adherence to it, in some degree enhances the enquirer's perception of some ultimate redemptive goal, and of the need to act in a certain manner to ensure attainment of that goal, then this answers the test 'Is this particular account soteriological?' Precisely how the enquirer envisages that 'ultimate goal' is at this point less significant than the consideration that

(a) an ultimate goal *is* posited, a goal not confined simply to assent to one or other set of rational propositions;
(b) in a soteriological account, the very terms of that account presuppose a *modification in behaviour* on the part of the enquirer who accepts those terms

A clearer understanding of the central issue involved here may be gained by reference to a valuable article by E. Conze[7] on certain questions of valid and invalid methodology in the comparative study of philosophies. Conze makes the important observation that certain philosophical accounts of reality that are actually 'soteriological' differ to a very minimal degree from non-soteriological accounts, if one judges both groups on the basis of their literal expression alone. But Conze rules out the validity of comparisons that rest solely upon literal resemblances in the texts examined, and he warns that negative statements (negative in either form or content) tend to be particularly misleading.

> David Hume's denial of a 'self' seems literally to agree with the *anattā* doctrine. Buddhists are certainly at one with him when he rejects the notion of a permanent self-identical substance in favour of a succession of impermanent states and events. . . . He

> understood our personality after the image of inanimate objects, which also have no 'self', or true inwardness of any kind. . . .[8]

Strikingly close though the 'Humean' and the Pali Buddhist accounts of the personality may seem, on initial inspection, Conze underlines the critically important point that the Buddhists – quite unlike Hume – do *not* intend or advocate that the comparison between the 'self' and inanimate objects be regarded a legitimate inference from their doctrine.

> Whereas Hume reduced selfhood to the level of the subpersonal, the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* invites us to search for the super-personal.[9]

Conze's whole discussion reinforces the point regarding the essential difference between the soteriological and non-soteriological philosophies by adducing evidence to explain why, for Hume, the very enterprise of 'searching for the super-personal' lacked meaning.

I accept Conze's observations on valid methodology and endeavour to avoid confusion between soteriological and non-soteriological philosophies in my examination of Solovyov's ideas on religion. I also take due note of Conze's warning about the scope for error in comparing *negative* statements that appear similar but actually belong to different contexts.

I should add, briefly, that even when two spiritual disciplines are to be compared, disciplines that *both* posit an ultimate goal of redemption for man, caution must be exercised. For example, a study of religious symbolism may all too easily lead to considerable error unless the contextual background of each spiritual Tradition is sufficiently appreciated. One example will suffice to illustrate the point: the symbol of the *house* or *home* represents entirely opposed notions in Judaism and Buddhism. In Judaism return to the 'home' signifies spiritual attainment, the end of a spiritual journey and of 'exile' in the wilderness. However, in Buddhism, being at 'home' or in the house signifies the *starting-point* of the spiritual life, the position of the unenlightened layman before he has given up the various forms of attachment to the secular life. *Leaving* the home represents considerable commitment to the spiritual life, and in Buddhism that commitment is represented by the 'homeless' state of the mendicant and the hermit.

4 DEFICIENCIES OF LANGUAGE IN THE DESCRIPTION OF MYSTICAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND IN THE AFFIRMATION OF NOTIONS ABOUT THE DIVINE

As has been indicated above, it is exceedingly difficult to verify for oneself what is recorded in mystics' accounts of their experiences and insights. The order of perceptions with which they are concerned resist transmission and even description. In his essay 'The Retreat from the Word', George Steiner writes:

> The Apostle tells us that in the beginning was the Word. He gives us no assurance as to the end.
>
> It is appropriate that he should have used the Greek language to express the Hellenistic conception of the *Logos*, for it is to the fact of its Graeco-Judaic inheritance that Western civilisation owes its essentially verbal character. We take this character for granted. It is the root and bark of our experience and we cannot readily transpose our imaginings outside it. We live inside the act of discourse. But we should not assume that a verbal matrix is the only one in which the articulations and conduct of the mind are conceivable. There are modes of intellectual and sensuous reality founded not on language, but on other communicative energies such as the icon or the musical note. And there are actions of the spirit rooted in silence. . .[10]

The perceptions and experiences of mystics have, since the time of Rudolf Otto, been called experiences of 'the Numinous', and Otto himself deals with problems of describability in his celebrated study *The Idea of the Holy (Das Heilige)*. Of Otto it has been written:

> . . . He was well trained in 'rational theology', yet he was also singularly aware of the 'non or suprarational' in the depth of the divine nature which can be apprehended as "the *feeling* which remains where the concept fails" and which he could express only by introducing "a terminology which is not more loose or indeterminate for having necessarily to make use of symbols".
>
> After Otto it is hardly possible to exclude from religious studies the preoccupation with the nature of religious experience as going beyond the senses and rational thought.[11]

In the opening chapter of *The Idea of the Holy* Otto succinctly expresses the central premise underlying his approach:

> . . . And so it is salutary that we should be incited to notice that religion is not exclusively contained and exhaustively comprised in any series of 'rational' assertions.[12]

In setting out to characterise the content of 'numinous experience', Otto claims that, as well as being 'awesome', the Numinous also 'shows itself as something uniquely attractive and *fascinating*'[13] (author's italics). That aspect of the Numinous is not, strictly, susceptible to description, and a variety of ascetic practices have been developed to afford perception of this 'mysterious' element in the Numinous:

> . . . In them [i.e. various spiritual states partly induced by ascetic practices] the *mysterium* is experienced in its essential, positive and specific character, as something that bestows upon man a beatitude beyond compare, but one whose real nature he can neither proclaim in speech nor conceive in thought, but may know only by a direct and living experience.[14]

The problems posed by transmission and expression of 'numinous experience' are taken up again in the following passage:

> There is, of course, no 'transmission' of it in the proper sense of the word; it cannot be 'taught', it must be 'awakened' from the spirit. And this could not justly be asserted, as it often is, of religion as a whole and in general, for in religion there *is* very much that *can* be taught – that is, handed down in concepts and passed on in school instruction. What is incapable of being so handed down is this numinous basis and background to religion, which can only be induced, incited, and aroused. This is least of all possible by mere verbal phrase or external symbol.[15]

One procedure to which mystics have commonly resorted, in their attempts to convey their perceptions to others, is that of providing analogies with perceptions or experiences familiar to the listener or reader. Such analogies will not fully convey the nature of the experience in question, but they may be employed as one means to refine our very indistinct grasp of these matters. Much could be written on the nature of analogy, but I shall confine myself to quoting from a very clear and useful discussion of analogies and models. In her book *The Hindu Religious Tradition*, Pratima Bowes

provides a comparison between models used in scientific explanation and those used in religion:

> . . . The ultimate aim of science is to *dispense* with models and metaphors at some stage of progress of inquiry into a certain field. . . . "The purpose of using models is to make them unnecessary by so familiarising ourselves with the new field of discovery that it can be described by means of its *own* language without comparison with something more familiar . . ."*. The greatest difficulty in talking about religious reality is that it has no language specific to itself, except a few terms that indicate this reality, but do not describe it, such as God, *Brahman*, the Infinite, or the Absolute. . . . Religious models remain metaphorical, and there is no help for it.[16] (My italics)

Among the most frequently used analogies to convey the intensity of the mystic's love for God (and the intensity of the feeling that this love was being reciprocated) is the analogy of the love experienced by bride and groom. This imagery was of considerable importance in the Rhineland during the thirteenth century, for Mechtilde of Magdeburg in particular, and this form of spirituality is known as the *Brautmystik*.[17] The closeness of man's relations to the Divine has also been indicated by the analogy of *filial devotion*, an analogy that particularly attracted Vladimir Solovyov. The philosopher explains this 'filial' aspect of Divine-human relations at some length in Part I of his *Justification of the Good*. Apart from the mystics' very extensive use of analogy in their writings, there has also been a tendency among these figures to employ a negative terminology rather than a positive one. This phenomenon is itself so extensive that one may speak of a whole Negative Theology, an apophatic theology as distinct from Positive Theology, also known as cataphatic theology.

For Positive Theology it is a valid approach to learn of God through consideration of His attributes, attributes such as Good, Merciful, Just, Loving, Wise, and so forth. The approach characteristic of Negative Theology relies on a rather different view of how knowledge of God may be obtained. The exponent of Negative Theology holds that our understanding of 'good' and our

*Here Pratima Bowes cites Mary Hesse's 'Role of Models in Scientific Theory'; see *Philosophical Problems of Natural Science*, ed. Dudley Shapere

human criteria for judging 'goodness' are so critically limited that it is inappropriate for us to assign such positive attributes to God. It would be preferable to conceive of God as being wholly *free* of all names, attributes, forms and definitions than to be misled by positive terms that we cannot invest with the absolute value they require if applied to the Divine. Jean Leclercq expresses the matter succinctly when he writes that this negation 'denies to God every limitation inherent in creation and in all than can be said or thought about creatures'.[18] Vladimir Lossky writes that the approach described here 'forbids us to follow natural ways of thought and to form concepts which would usurp the place of spiritual realities'.[19] Lossky has treated the subject of Negative Theology extensively, and in his outstanding work *Théologie Négative et Connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart*, published in 1960 after his death, he devoted the serious attention to this subject that it has always merited but so often been denied. His aim was not to dispute the rights or status of Positive Theology, but to provide an authoritative defence for Negative Theology. Lossky explained that when we reflect on the Divine, attachment to His positive attributes can have an undesirable limiting effect:

> In saying that God is eminently Being, Goodness, Wisdom, one remains still attached to concepts found down here [on earth], one does not leave behind creatures so as to seek to know their Cause [as It is] in Itself.[20]

The *seeming* denial of 'goodness' in God caused grave problems for figures such as Meister Eckhart, and the paradoxical nature of many of their statements (especially when cited out of their proper context)[21] allowed for misconceptions that still require correction today. No outright denial of 'goodness' in God was involved, rather, an attempt to establish the radical distinction between Divine goodness and 'creaturely' goodness.[22]

That the question of assigning or not assigning attributes to the Godhead posed problems not just in the Christian Tradition may be seen in Surendranath Dasgupta's *History of Indian Philosophy*. The debate arose between defenders and opponents of Sankara's absolute monism:

> . . . Another question of importance arises in connection with the attribution of the epithets 'truth', 'knowledge', 'infinite' to

> *Brahman*. Is *Brahman*, to whom all these qualities are attributed, a simple unity in Himself, or is He a complex of many qualities, truth, knowledge, infinite etc. which have different connotations and are not synonymous? Pure intelligence (*caitanya)* is one, but these epithets are many. How can we conceive the one *caitanya* to coexist in itself with the many attributes which are said to belong to it? How is the plurality of these attributes to be implied in the unity of the one?[23]

Here, clearly, the assigning or non-assigning of attributes to God is invoked for rather different reasons than those put forward in the dispute between Meister Eckhart and Franciscan scholars over the primacy of the Intellect or of the Will. However, it should be noted that the matter of assigning attributes to God does have a direct bearing upon the debate cited by Dasgupta and upon the outcome of that debate. The assigning or non-assigning of attributes clearly does have certain important consequences for philosophy and theology. It is *not* a matter of a random choice between two views or approaches that are inter-changeable. Lossky stresses that the Negative Theology

> is not a branch of theology, a chapter, or an inevitable introduction on the incomprehensibility of God from which one passes unruffled to a doctrinal exposition in the usual terminology of human reason and philosophy in general.[24]

The *difference in viewpoint* that the assigning and non-assigning of attributes represent is very well conveyed by T. M. P. Mahadevan (again, in the context of Vedāntic philosophy) in a paper entitled 'Vedāntic Meditation and its Relation to Action':

> There is meditation on *Brahman* with attributes (*saguna*); there is also meditation on *Brahman* without attributes, without qualifications (*nirguna*) . . . *Brahman* is the same, as *nirguna* (attributeless) and as *saguna* (with attributes). There are not two *Brahmans*, as wrongly alleged by some critics. Even when God is referred to as the lower (*apara*) *Brahman*, what is meant is not that *Brahman* has become lower in status as God, but that God is *Brahman* looked at from the lower level of relative experience. There are two forms (*dvirūpa*) of *Brahman* and not two *Brahmans*: *Brahman* as-it-is-in-itself and *Brahman* as-it-is-in-relation-to-the-world.

> The former is the unconditioned *Brahman*; the latter is *Brahman* as conditioned by nomenclature, configuration and change.[25]

It is not necessary, at this point, to extend this account of the line of thought by which Negative Theology normally proceeds. I have indicated that this specific approach to obtaining and expressing 'knowledge of God' answered the requirements of numerous mystics more exactly than did Positive Theology when these men and women attempted to communicate their insights to others. However, this is not at all to say that Negative Theology replaces or excludes Positive Theology; nor does Negative Theology diminish the worth of prayer and practices associated with invocation of the Divine Names or with devotion to the Divine in Its personal aspect.

My own reading and study of this subject convinces me that a specific and wholly serious investigation of Vladimir Solovyov's religious philosophy leads naturally to a consideration of Negative Theology and of 'the contemplative knowledge of God'.

* * *

In the foregoing pages I have identified some features of mysticism, and of philosophies centred upon mystical apprehension, that resist analysis and reduction into categories of thought which are operative and valid in normal, intelligible discourse. I have sought to show that the attempt to examine writings on one or other aspect of mysticism and to arrive at trustworthy and revealing conclusions regarding their content can be greatly assisted by attentive recollection of certain distinctions that must be observed in one's methodological approach. I have mentioned the all-important distinction between soteriological and non-soteriological accounts of the human personality, and I have also drawn attention to the use of models and analogies characteristic of science and that characteristic of religion, particularly recommending Pratima Bowes's illuminating discussion of their similarities and differences. In this chapter I have confined myself to two principal tasks: to mentioning four areas of difficulty in the accurate analysis of mystical writings and thought, and to setting down principles of method that I observe in this study of Vladimir Solovyov's religious philosophy. Before passing to the two chapters which present his central teachings, it would be helpful to consider his personal

character, family background and the main events in his career. Then Chapter 3 begins to establish the importance that Tradition, scholarship and practical wisdom held in the life and outlook of Russia's most renowned philosopher.

2

The Life and Career of Vladimir Solovyov

Where Vladimir Solovyov is concerned, I cannot begin to provide the wealth of biographical information and insights offered by Konstantin Mochulsky or Sergey Solovyov, the philosopher's own nephew,[1] and those who do not have access to these Russian-language biographies are unfortunate. Mine, however, is not primarily a biographical study. Msgr Michel d'Herbigny's frequently quoted book *Vladimir Soloviev: Un Newman russe* (1918) is not reliable either in factual detail or in emphasis.[2] Some pertinent observations about Solovyov's personal character are included in the chapter which N. O. Lossky devotes to his thought in *History of Russian Philosophy* (1952).[3] More critical views are presented by Georgiy Chulkov and Alexey Remizov, and by Thomas G. Masaryk in his celebrated work *The Spirit of Russia* (1919).[4] Masaryk actually goes so far as to call Solovyov 'a decadent struggling for regeneration'.[5] Paul Allen's book *Vladimir Soloviev: Russian Mystic* (1978) places much weight on the philosopher's biography, but errs on the side of uncritical adulation.[6] Here, however, the text is supplemented by numerous interesting illustrations that are not easy to find elsewhere: of Solovyov's parents, figures who influenced him, places where he studied or visited, and several which depict the philosopher at various stages in his life.

There are two good reasons for using Solovyov's biography as a guide to his religious philosophy. Firstly, his abiding concern with the *wholeness* of man – his requirement that man should use *all* his faculties in his service of the truth – underlines the point that any valid conclusions about Solovyov's achievements in the spiritual and intellectual spheres need balanced reference to other aspects of his life. Secondly, Solovyov was so insistent on the *application* of Christian teaching to the actual life of the individual and to his relations with others that he would have expected the proper

bringing together of personal life and professed religious beliefs to serve as the criterion in others' assessment of *his* life.

Vladimir Solovyov was born on 16 January 1853, the second son of the eminent historian Professor Sergey Mikhailovich Solovyov (1820–79). He was brought up in Moscow, where his father lectured and eventually served as Rector at the university. Solovyov's grandfather, Mikhail Vasil'evich, and other figures on the paternal side of his family were members of the clergy, and Professor Solovyov, though not inclined to follow that family tradition himself, remained a practising member of the Russian Orthodox Church, firm in his Christian convictions. Defending his father's name and integrity in an article of 1896,[7] Vladimir Solovyov described him as 'unshakeably convinced of the positive truths of Christianity', commenting that at the same time Sergey Solovyov never sought to impose his own faith on others. The Solovyov children were brought up to follow the observances of the Orthodox Church, and the young Vladimir accepted his father's guidance in these matters and in his reading.[8] The philosopher's mother, Poliksena Vladimirovna (*née* Romanova, d. 1909), was absorbed in the welfare of her husband and her large family. She bore twelve children, of whom three died in infancy and one died at the age of seven years. Biographers have commented upon one particular feature of her Christian faith and her temperament, recording that Poliksena Vladimirovna tended towards perception of the irrational, mysterious aspects of life; in one account she is portrayed as feeling 'a constant unease' and as having 'mysterious premonitions'.[9] She is viewed, then, as one likely source of the philosopher's own prophetic powers, and his quest to penetrate the hidden forces of nature and of the spirit is associated with that side of his mother's character. Through his mother's side of the family Vladimir Solovyov was in fact related to another, earlier religious philosopher, the Ukrainian Grigoriy Savvich Skovoroda (1722–94).[10]

Solovyov's autobiographical poem 'Three Meetings'[11] alludes to his early childhood, when he firmly believed in God and his religious feelings were exceptionally intense. The earliest of three mystical visions that he experienced in the course of his lifetime occurred in 1862, during a church service, when he was nine years old. The three visions that are the subject of this celebrated poem will require further consideration, for they were central to his whole life and philosophy. The biographer Konstantin Mochulsky

provides a detailed and evocative account of this early and intense period in Solovyov's life and then traces how the boy's religious convictions gave way to an equally intense commitment to the nihilist and materialist creeds, whose new prominence marked the decade of the 1860s in Russia. The utilitarian ethics propounded by the radical publicists Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pisarev, the direct questioning of the values cherished by the generation of the 1840s, reached as far as the school classrooms and found favour with Solovyov and large numbers of his contemporaries. The philosopher Lev Mikhailovich Lopatin (1855–1920) was a slightly younger childhood friend of Solovyov's, and was conscious of the admiration that his friend's preoccupation with nihilist ideas elicited among the boys. When the journal *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology* devoted one entire issue to obituary articles honouring Solovyov and his achievements, Lev Lopatin contributed an article concerning his lifelong friend. He attached very considerable importance to the philosopher's attraction to materialism and Positivism:

> Solovyov experienced [the influence of] materialism and Positivism upon him so deeply, he was so passionately attracted to each of these, he invested so much of his own soul in them, that if there had not occurred that upheaval in his ideas which I mentioned earlier [that is, his return to religious beliefs and values], he certainly would have emerged as one of the most brilliant and penetrating apostles of the new philosophical movement.[12]

The writer and publicist Vasiliy Vasil'evich Rozanov (1856–1919) also regarded Solovyov as somehow akin to 'the men of the Sixties' (the *shestidesyatniki*), and wrote of him in those terms.[13]

Solovyov succeeded in his school studies and gained admission to the University of Moscow in 1869. A record of the philosophers with whose works he was familiar even during his schooldays shows him to have been a particularly precocious student, with an unusually great capacity for work. He appears to have assimilated, admired and then found wanting a succession of prominent West European philosophies in extremely rapid sequence.[14] Eventually, feeling an increasingly strong need for a philosophy that offered 'positive content' (rather than simply a critique of other systems), Solovyov adopted Spinoza's pantheism, and subsequently, from

that stance, he found it possible to regain his religious faith and to reaffirm the worth of Christian thought.

Following his university studies (initially in natural sciences and then in philosophy), Solovyov took an exceedingly unusual step, and in the Summer of 1873 he moved to the Moscow Theological Academy at Sergiev-Posad so that he could attend theology lectures during the next academic year. Given the mutual distrust with which the clergy and the Russian intelligentsia viewed each other at this period, the young graduate's chosen course of study appeared unaccountable. Professor Solovyov regretted his son's decision,[15] and indeed Vladimir Solovyov's new hosts and the lecturers at the Theological Academy themselves felt unsure how to interpret his intentions.[16] Mochulsky writes that this decision seriously to study theology in effect constituted a direct challenge to society,[17] for during the middle to late nineteenth-century Empiricism, Positivism and the natural sciences were regarded as intellectually 'respectable', while theology bore negative associations and failed to stimulate general interest in educated circles. Although Solovyov's move to Sergiev-Posad appeared to be a self-imposed isolation and a severance from the life of Moscow and its university, his thoughts were actually directed to the contribution he intended to make in the field of philosophy. He availed himself of the opportunity to read extensively in the subject (and kept up a parallel course of reading in Patristic theology), and he prepared himself for future work. The deep confidence he felt with regard to the eventual fruitfulness of these studies finds expression in his private correspondence, especially in the letters to his beloved cousin Ekaterina Romanova.[18] Solovyov's friend and biographer Vasiliy Lvovich Velichko commented upon this sense of confidence,[19] while I.I. Yanzhul, who came to know Solovyov slightly during the course of a stay in London in 1875 (at which time the philosopher was aged twenty-two years), gathered the impression that he had an inordinately high opinion of his own abilities.[20]

The young philosopher wrote a Master's thesis entitled *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* (*Krizis zapadnoy filosofii*),[21] and his extremely able defence of the thesis in November 1874, at the age of twenty-one, won him great scholarly recognition. He was offered a lectureship at the University of Moscow, and between January and March 1875 he delivered a course of lectures on the history of philosophy. In the early Summer of that same year he applied for

leave to study in England, using sources in the British Museum. Permission was granted, and at the beginning of June 1875 he left Russia. He lodged in rented accommodation at 39 Great Russell Street, almost opposite the British Museum, and from July until late October he worked very intensively indeed, reading Cabbalistic and other mystical literature. It appears that he paid minimal attention to his surroundings in England, barely even leaving London, and he also tended to keep his distance from other Russians staying in the city. While there, he did, however, take the opportunity to investigate spiritualism, for he knew of the established reputation of spiritualists and mediums in England. His experiences at séances proved disappointing, and he felt the spiritualists whom he met to be fraudulent.[22]

The second of Solovyov's three mystical visions took place in the Reading Room of the British Museum, after the young man had prayed to Sophia, the feminine embodiment of Divine Wisdom (*Bozhestvennaya Premudrost'*), asking her to reveal herself to him, as she had done in his childhood. On this occasion Solovyov saw only the face of Sophia, and he heard a command to go to Egypt in the hope of being granted a fuller vision there. Solovyov prepared his departure immediately, and in a matter of days he set off, informing his parents of his new destination, but not really clarifying the purpose of his journey. He was granted one more vision, out in the Sahara Desert, and although comparatively little is known about the way Solovyov spent his time in Egypt (between November 1875 and March 1876), it is extremely likely that his preoccupation with, and knowledge of, religious matters deepened during those months following his intensive studies in London. It is not possible to establish with any certainty whether he located any mystics, spiritual teachers or guardians of secret Cabbalistic teachings, this being one possible purpose of his journey to Egypt. It is plausible that Solovyov set off to Egypt for reasons connected with his second mystical vision, the one which occurred in London, and then, being attracted to his new surroundings, decided to prolong his stay simply so as to rest. He wrote summoning a friend, Prince D. N. Tsertelev, to come and join him, and this suggests that Solovyov considered it possible to rest from his work. Mochulsky records that he enjoyed, and was refreshed by, the weeks spent with Prince Tsertelev. Solovyov's third and final vision, one that imparted a profound sense of universal harmony, has particular importance for his religious philosophy. It is considered at greater length in

Chapter 4. Passing back through parts of Europe, Solovyov returned to Russia to resume lecturing and further writing. Between 1877 and 1881 he delivered his twelve celebrated *Lectures on Godmanhood*. The religious and philosophical stance he adopted in those lectures, his known opposition to the Positivists[23] against whom his Master's thesis was directed, his youth and his very considerable reputation as a stimulating speaker, caused many to attend, including such eminent figures as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

At this same time, 1877–81, Solovyov and Dostoevsky were drawn together in friendship. Sergey Solovyov (the philosopher's nephew and biographer) and Lev Shestov[24] argue that there was actually less of a true affinity between Solovyov and Dostoevsky than is sometimes assumed. However, even if one accepts the point made by both these critics, there must still have been wide and very important areas of agreement between them, a shared recognition and acceptance of Christian goals and, for both writers, the strongest possible emphasis upon the responsibilities and the freedom of mankind. (See Appendix I: 'Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov'.)

In 1878, when Dostoevsky was grieving for the death of his infant child Alyosha, his wife approached Solovyov and asked him to accompany Fyodor Mikhailovich to the monastery of Optina Pustyn. Dostoevsky's purpose was to seek advice and consolation from the holy *starets* called Amvrosy.[25] His letters to his wife mention the various difficulties involved in reaching Optina Pustyn, but they contain nothing about his companion Solovyov. Apart from Solovyov's indication that the novelist talked of progress with his present work *Brothers Karamazov*, we have no record of the hours that the two men may have spent in conversation. Certain commentators have suggested that Solovyov served as one possible model for the character Alyosha Karamazov, the most spiritual of the brothers; others have put forward arguments for Solovyov being a model for Ivan Karamazov, the intellectual.[26] Since Dostoevsky drew from so many sources for the creation of his fictional heroes and since he produced what are in effect 'composite characters', it is hard to assert that Solovyov was portrayed in either of the two brothers. There is only one piece of tangible evidence to suggest the Solovyov–Ivan Karamazov kinship:Ivan Karamazov's article on Church-state relations (discussed in Book II of the novel) is permeated with ideas attributable

to Solovyov. In the novel those ideas are shown to have a dual aspect, positive and negative: the subject matter of Ivan's article seems to suggest a preoccupation with spiritual matters, but the starets Zosima challenges Ivan and suggests that he does not believe what he has written. This might suggest that Dostoevsky had certain reservations about the merits of Solovyov's ideas on the Church and the state, but one could not press such a claim very far. Dostoevsky's wife, Anna Grigorievna, records that her husband looked upon Solovyov with great affection and even paternal feeling.[27] The question whether their closeness and friendship rested upon deep agreement or thrived despite disagreement remains to be studied at greater length than is possible here.

At the end of the 1870s Solovyov worked simultaneously on two of his early and important books, namely *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (*Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniya*) and *A Critique of Abstract Principles* (*Kritika otvlechënnykh nachal*),[28] and he was due to submit one of these as a doctoral thesis at the University of Petersburg. He was advised to submit *A Critique of Abstract Principles* as his thesis, and submitted the work in 1880. The thesis was accepted in April that year and subsequently published.

Solovyov moved from Moscow to Petersburg, and there he gave lectures on the history of philosophy for the 'Higher Education Courses for Women' (*Vysshie zhenskie kursy*) in 1880 and 1881.[29] However, his livelihood as a lecturer came into jeopardy in 1881, in the following circumstances. At the end of a public lecture delivered not very long after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II Solovyov proposed that the new Tsar, Alexander III, should, as a Christian monarch, abide by Christian principles and show clemency towards his father's assassins. The philosopher's motives appear to have been misunderstood, and his statement was viewed in a bad light in official circles. The young lecturer wrote a letter to the Tsar to apologise and to clarify possible misunderstandings. Although Solovyov was not obliged to resign from his lectureship, he did offer his resignation and it was accepted. This occurred in November 1881.

From this point in his career the philosopher earned his livelihood by his writing alone. The beginning of the 1880s marks a new direction in Solovyov's ideas and activities. The need to reconcile East and West, the two great but conflict-ridden cultures, assumed increasing importance for him. This concern with

reconciliation was reflected in his writings: he devoted increasing energy and time to publicistic articles for the journals (the *'tolstye zhurnaly'* in whose pages the intelligentsia debated the political, social and religious issues that required solution). He also sought practical means to enhance reconciliation of the divided Christian cultures. He was, indeed, a very early advocate of the reunion of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, and his ecumenical spirit offended significant numbers of his Russian Orthodox readers.

Solovyov's reflection upon the causes of the rift between Eastern and Western Christendom led naturally to a reassessment of the dispute between the Slavophiles and Westernisers. Although the prominent figures who had engaged in this dispute during the 1840s and 1850s – Ivan Kireevsky, Alexey Khomyakov, Alexander Herzen – were now dead, others perpetuated the conflict. Solovyov was much dismayed by the emergence of a crude nationalism among the new generation of Slavophiles, and he severely criticised this phenomenon.[30] His writings on the Slavophile–Westerniser dispute are wide-ranging and lengthy: they appear under the collective title *The National Question in Russia* (*Natsional'niy vopros v Rossii*),[31] the first set of these articles belonging to the years 1883–88, and the second set to the years 1888–91.

Solovyov, who, like Ivan Kireevsky and Alexey Khomyakov, viewed the Russians as a religious people, felt entirely justified in criticising the Slavophiles of the 1880s, for they seemed to admire the physical might of their country rather than the nation's Christian values. Indeed, Solovyov felt himself *obliged* to expose the nationalism they preached and to underline the differences between such men as N. Danilevsky, author of *Russia and Europe* (1871), and the more enlightened and tolerant Alexey Khomyakov. Solovyov's writings on this dispute were not always interpreted in the best light, and a seeming change of allegiance from the Slavophile camp to the Westernisers' camp evoked a hostile response from people on both sides.[32] Also, people were perhaps not entirely prepared for the strength of his polemical attacks, the occasional sharpness of which seemed incompatible with the philosopher's gentleness of manner.

By 1886 Solovyov's ideas on reunion between the Churches had developed to the point where he read and studied Catholic historians and theologians with increasing sympathy. He established contact with Jesuit priests who assured him that his ideas on the reunion of the Churches (and on other matters) would be well

received in Europe.[33] He also came to know the Croatian Archbishop Strossmayer, and he spent several weeks as a guest at his residence in the Summer of 1886. The two men agreed on many matters, and they sought practically to advance the cause of reunion. Solovyov's hopes of success in this project proved to be premature; however, the good will of his Croatian hosts served him when he could not have *The History and Future of Theocracy* published in Russia.[34] With their assistance, and using his personal funds, Solovyov arranged for Part I to be published in Zagreb in 1887. This work dismayed many Russian readers and was unacceptable to the censors, even in its incomplete form.[35]

In 1888 the philosopher travelled to Paris where, in May, he delivered a lecture in French entitled *L'Idée Russe*.[36] The following year Solovyov published an entire book in French so that West Europeans might become familiar with his ideas. This book, called *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*,[37] contained some of the principal ideas intended for inclusion in *The History and Future of Theocracy*, and it also included an explicit recognition of the Pope's special status among the Bishops of the Church. Numerous Orthodox believers took such statements to be a betrayal of the Orthodox Tradition and as evidence of Solovyov's personal conversion to the Roman Catholic faith.[38] In effect Solovyov's position was an increasingly isolated one: he did *not* advocate that individual members of the Orthodox Church should profess belief in the Catholic faith or 'convert to Rome',[39] for, despite the rift between the Churches that took full effect in 1054, Solovyov believed that there were no substantial reasons for the continued separation of the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches. With sufficient good will on either side, and mutual respect, the ideal of Christian unity and unanimity could, according to Solovyov, be made a reality. This viewpoint was not fully appreciated in Russia or Europe at that time. Some of the philosopher's Catholic hosts and correspondents in Europe had hoped that he would accept the Catholic faith, and they were dismayed both by his resistance to their suggestions and by his mystical and apparently heterodox interpretations of Trinitarian theology in *La Russie et l'Eglise l'Universelle*. Solovyov, for his part, was not wholly in accord with these Catholics, and his correspondence indicates that at this period, the end of the 1880s, time spent in Europe caused him to feel and to miss his Russian roots.[40]

The decade 1890 to 1900 saw a second major change of emphasis

in Solovyov's activities, but that period was marked by the same intense preoccupation with work and writing that he showed in the previous decade. He depended entirely on his writing, on the royalties from his books and on the fees from his journalistic articles. His position was made more precarious due to the limitations imposed on him by the ecclesiastical and political censors.[41] For many years he was forbidden the right to publish articles on theology, and after 1881 he did not lecture publicly for ten years. Nor did he hold any university post during the later years of his career. He moved mainly between the cities of Moscow and Petersburg, staying at the *Hotel d'Angleterre* in Petersburg and spending some of the Summer months on the estate of friends, where he could work in peaceful seclusion, or in Finland on the edge of Lake Saima. His books and few possessions were spread among the homes of the various friends who gave him lodgings. Contemporaries of Solovyov, such as A. F. Koni, observe that his way of life was appropriate to his character and that it indicated a certain aspect of his spirituality. He was, according to this view, a *'strannik'*, that is, a wandering pilgrim, with no fixed home or roots in this earthly world, a man whose sights and energies were wholly directed to the world of the spirit.[42] (See Appendix I for a further consideration of this 'pilgrim' image and of Solovyov's alleged *renunciation* of 'the world'.).

As regards romantic attachments, two women were especially important to Solovyov. The first of these was his young cousin Ekaterina Romanova, the recipient of some of the most important early letters of Solovyov.[43] He had hoped and intended to marry her, but three factors prevented this: his parents' objections to the marriage, his elder brother Vsevolod's attentions to Ekaterina during Vladimir's prolonged absences (partly due, also, to Vladimir's diffidence)[44] and, finally, the young man's realisation that his life's work and his commitment to philosophy were incompatible with marriage and settled family life.[45] The other woman who won Solovyov's devotion was Sophia Khitrovo. She belonged to the circle of friends of Count Alexey K. Tolstoy's widow, a circle that included the philosopher. The long and eventually unfruitful attachment to Sophia Khitrovo, which is supposed to have lasted as long as ten years, and shorter-lasting attachments to women who inspired some of his lyrical poems,[46] can be taken to have provided substance for Solovyov's reflections on the nature of love.

The years 1890 to 1900 saw the publication of his *The Meaning of Love* (*Smysl lyubvi*),[47] *Justification of the Good* (*Opravdanie dobra*), *The Drama of Plato's Life* (*Zhiznennaya drama Platona*) and *Three Conversations* (*Tri razgovora*),[48] besides the first chapters of a work on theoretical philosophy, articles on aesthetics, literary reviews (including a controversial account of Pushkin's life and significance), translations of some Platonic dialogues (in collaboration with his younger brother Mikhail) and his own lyrical poetry.

In this final decade of his life Solovyov pursued theoretical work in philosophy, as he had done in the first stage of his career, between 1873 and 1880. This devotion to theoretical aspects of philosophy did not, however, exclude cultural and political concerns. During these years he consistently wrote of his fears that the Christian culture of Russia was threatened by imminent subjection to, and possible destruction at the hands of, the Chinese people. (See Chapter 9.)

Solovyov's return to theoretical philosophy may be interpreted in positive or negative terms. He was certainly disappointed that the leading representatives of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches had failed to find sufficient common ground to bring about their reconciliation. His theocratic schemes were praised at the Vatican, but considered impractical. In Russia the conception of Christian rule to which Tsar Alexander III and Pobedonostsev subscribed was very different from the model of Christian rule which Solovyov presented in his writings. Official sanction and adoption of Solovyov's ideas on Church-state relations were, to say the least, very improbable.

It was not disappointment alone that prompted Solovyov to return to theoretical work and to relegate practical enterprises to a secondary place. In certain respects the work which he undertook between 1890 and 1900 constitutes an important *reaffirmation* of a Christian scheme of values. In the early years of that decade this reaffirmation took the form of a work on 'the meaning of love'. Subsequently he was concerned with a large-scale revision and reformulation of his moral philosophy, and he gave this work the significant title *Justification of the Good* (*Opravdanie dobra*). Some commentators hold this to be his greatest contribution to philosophy, while others particularly admire his last work, *Three Conversations* (*Tri razgovora*). Both works were intended to affirm the Good and to show that assent to the Good really entailed more than a passive resistance to evil. Without specifically naming his opponent, Solovyov engaged in a lengthy polemical argument to

show the deficiencies of the Tolstoyan precept of *non-resistance to evil* (*neprotivlenie zlu*).[49]

In 1898 Solovyov travelled through Europe again and briefly revisited Egypt.[50] On this occasion he went through an extremely disturbing experience of the close presence of evil. The views that he expressed in public during the last two years of his life, between 1898 and 1900, concerned the imminent conflict between Russia and China, of which he had written throughout the preceding eight years, and which he now expressed in pessimistic, apocalyptic terms (see Chapter 9). His earlier confidence that the Christian social ideal would be established within the course of human history was replaced by a conviction that the majority of Christian believers would be tragically misled by an Antichrist offering false promises about unity among men and an attractive, but false, scheme for the organisation of human society. In Solovyov's vision of the future,[51] expressed in *A Short Story about Antichrist* (*Kratkaya povest' ob antikhriste*), only a very small number of Christians discern the fraudulent nature of the Antichrist's promised Utopia, and these few categorically reject what he offers them. Comparison of this story with Dostoevsky's 'Legend of the Grand Inquisitor' yields interesting ideas, but the reception given to Solovyov's apocalyptic tale when he read it to select audiences, was largely unfavourable. In some quarters the philosopher was now dismissed as eccentric or wholly mad, while even several of his friends felt his preoccupation with apocalypse and the Yellow Peril to be unhealthy, a regrettable development in his thought.

Solovyov's character combined many elements, and light-heartedness alternated with great intensity. His love of incongruity and his humour might well be compared to that of Lewis Carroll, with a multitude of puns and humorous verses spilling from his pen. His generosity was almost saintly, and he devoted his energies to the defence of oppressed groups, the Jews in particular. His personal loneliness, however, was extreme. Sergey Solovyov, who benefited from opportunities to observe the philosopher amid his immediate family circle and out of the public eye, wrote that in the later years his uncle used humour and jokes to smother personal pain and anxiety.[52] Further than this, he seemed to need wine to sustain his energy.[53] The years of work seriously affected Solovyov's health, and yet he envisaged great projects ahead, and exhausted himself. Indeed, overcome by illness in the course of his forty-eighth year, Solovyov, in his dying hours, spoke these words: 'The Lord's work is difficult'.

3

Tradition, Scholarship and Practical Wisdom

'. . . There is [an] incessant and insatiable urge inherent in the human mind to seek more and more knowledge about the world and about itself which occasionally turns into a pursuit of wisdom, of a global view or experience of reality or of "truth as such". This pursuit may remain a conceptual one as most systems of philosophy show, but sometimes it overflows into a burning desire to penetrate the whole truth fully, to solve the mystery of existence directly in one's own heart, but, at the same time, with a degree of validity which could be called universal'.

Karel Werner[1]

Whatever their fundamental premises may be (monotheistic, polytheistic, Deist, mechanistic or pantheistic), cosmological accounts of our world at some point assign a certain status to man, indicative of his place in the overall pattern of events and growth-processes. These accounts vary widely, since they depend on differing conceptions of man, but in particular they vary according to the degree of *active* participation that they envisage for man in the 'world process'.

The course of religious and philosophical thought, from the earliest Judaic speculation and from the Vedic period in India to the present day, reflects the whole range of possible interpretations of man's role, from extreme passivity to extreme mastery of his environment and self-determination. Between these poles of passivity and self-determination belong the many and varied cosmological accounts that assign to man a *mediatory* role between higher and lower 'worlds', or between higher and lower beings. (Such pictures of man in a 'mediatory' role tend to be founded upon a conception of him as a complex, composite being, partaking of two or more distinct natures, for example animal/spiritual, animal/human/angelic, physical/psychic/spiritual, irrational/

rational/suprarational, and so forth). In the case of Vladimir Solovyov, he saw man's status as a 'moral being', his ethics and obligations, the nature of his activity, his capacity for awareness of self and his other faculties as all deriving from his 'mediatory' position between the Divine Absolute and material nature.

While the earliest cosmological accounts tend towards expression in mythic terms, some exponents of cosmological theory have endeavoured to establish an intimate connection between universal laws and the motive forces of history, in many instances providing references to clearly identifiable points in chronological, historically-recorded time. The concern to establish that connection is very largely confined to the Judaeo-Christian world, and is most associated with European writers coming in the wake of Hegel and Schelling. Such endeavours to link cosmology and history or historiography may have a religious basis (as for Solovyov), finding their evidence in the said 'historical' religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islām, or, on the other hand, these endeavours may be avowedly secular and anthropocentric.

In this book I am concerned with the personal spirituality of the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov and with the perspective on religious faith that his writings provide. These writings are a very rich source for reflection, and they permit – and often compel – us to go beyond familiar categories of thought. To follow him the whole way is far from easy: as one of his numerous poems indicates, he was aware of the strength and brilliance of 'the sun of love',[2] but he also sensed the 'dark' aspects of existence: falsehood and oppressive evil. He was convinced that it was our supreme task to overcome this evil, and certain details of his biography suggest that he died a disappointed man, fearing that too little had been done to avert punishment and apocalypse.

Solovyov's contemporary readers were to be found among the educated circles of Russian society, to which he himself belonged. Although he shared their educational background and absorbed much of what was thought best in West European thought and literature, he initially made his name among scholars on account of his resistance to Positivism.

It was Comte and a whole range of secular thinkers who captured the imagination of the Russian intelligentsia during the 1860s and 1870s. The young Solovyov became convinced of the need to win educated Russians away from their *exclusive* admiration for those secular schools of thought, in which intellectual fashion played no

small part. He himself had felt the influence of Comte, but he subsequently came to see his life's work as being a reaffirmation of the values put forward in the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

At the time when Solovyov's early philosophical works appeared in print (the period from 1874 to 1880) and in the two following decades there was, among educated Russians, a marked lack of concern for traditional Christian teachings and, more particularly, for the viewpoint and pronouncements of the established Russian Orthodox Church. There was, indeed, a strong sense of disaffection, a very evident lack of common ground between the representatives of the Church and the Russian intelligentsia. In the eyes of educated Russians the Church lacked credibility, and its views were more readily associated with superstition and obscurantism than with cogent, realistic thought about the important issues and problems that face man. Solovyov deplored the existence of this great gulf, and he worked to achieve the recommitment of the educated laity to a life centred on Christ and His Church.

The Introduction to Solovyov's work *The History and Future of Theocracy* states explicitly the terms in which the philosopher conceived his task:

> To justify the faith of our fathers, raising it to a new level of rational consciousness; to show how this ancient faith, when freed of the bonds of local insularity and national pride, coincides with the eternal and universal truth – this is the general task [towards which] my labour [is directed].[3]

Solovyov was concerned with *restatement* of the tenets of the Christian faith, and he had a very particular readership in mind. In fact, it may be seen, from the philosopher's early correspondence, that he did not regard educated people as blameworthy in their resistance to the teachings of the Church. He actually went so far as to say that in view of the unsound and defective accounts of Christian teaching available to believers, the resistance of educated people was both understandable and justified.[4] He was convinced that a significantly more comprehensive, articulate and rationally sound exposition of Christian teaching could be formulated, and he applied himself to this task.

Solovyov's entire view of Christianity was informed by the idea that the principle of *love* which it preached, if it is indeed

efficacious, transformative and – ultimately – redemptive, must be realized in practical terms in the very organisation of human society. Solovyov's cosmological views, and his intense perception of the unity (or Pan-Unity, *vseedinstvo*) and inter-relatedness of all beings led him to determine an ideal framework for the society of men, which he conceived as being, essentially, a 'spiritual community'.

According to Pauline teaching and the accepted symbolism of Christianity, this community is designated as 'the mystical Body of Christ'. It is a symbol that Solovyov wholly accepted, one that evidently inspired him personally and that is centrally important in his religious writings.

Solovyov was aware that men had *not* as yet *achieved* the degree of unanimity of purpose and action requisite for a community rightly called 'spiritual'. He refers constantly, in his works, to the discrepancy between *that which is* (*to, chto est'*) and *that which ought to be* (*to, chto dolzhno byt'*).[5] His private correspondence during the years 1872 and 1873, the years immediately prior to the publication of his Master's Thesis *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, is noteworthy for its clear and lengthy passages expressing his preoccupation with the imperfect state of the created world, with the undesirable and deficient nature of phenomenal, time-bound existence. Reflection on this theme proved immensely fruitful for Solovyov, for it led him to the celebrated affirmation in the second of his *Lectures on Godmanhood* (*Chteniya o bogochelovechestve*): there he stated that man is such that he *cannot* rest satisfied with limited existence – he strives to attain complete freedom and 'the plenitude of being'.[6] (The lectures that followed this bold assertion provide a closely argued case for a recognition of the Divine Absolute, God, and of His direct bearing on our existence.)

Solovyov moves readily from one branch of learning to another as he sets out his principal teachings. He held that the imperfect nature of our existence is most clearly manifest in the condition of *alienation* (*otchuzhdenie*), in the mutual opposition and exclusion of beings.[7] In the *Lectures on Godmanhood* he argues that one form of constraint which we encounter is the conflicting will of other beings. Submission to the will of others entails constraint of our own freedom, at least under the conditions of our present, finite existence. This mutual constraint and opposition of wills is reflected, on a more rudimentary level of existence, in the *impenetrability* (*nepronitsaemost'*) of physical matter: two physical

bodies may not occupy one and the same space at the same time, and the presence of one excludes the possibility of the other body occupying that particular space. However, in an argument that it would be premature to state fully here, Solovyov takes openness and receptivity (*vospriimnost'*) to be the counterparts of the impenetrability of matter, and expresses the conviction that conscious, reflective man, using his unique faculty of *self-awareness* (*samosoznatel'nost'*), can make himself *receptive* to the action of the Divine Absolute Principle and thereby serve as a channel for divine grace and for the ultimate redemption and spiritualisation of all created matter.

The biographies written by Ernest Radlov, Sergey Solovyov, Konstantin Mochulsky and others draw our attention to the intensity and depth of the young philosopher's study of the West European philosophical schools. It should be noted, here, that while Solovyov acknowledged his indebtedness to Kant, Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann, and while he was acutely aware of the contribution made to philosophy by Kant's critical method, his own work reflects certain Russian preoccupations. This point is affirmed by N. O. Lossky in his *History of Russian Philosophy*:

> The characteristic features of Russian philosophical thought – the search for an exhaustive knowledge of reality as a whole and the concreteness of metaphysical conceptions – find a particularly clear expression in Soloviev's work and are quite definitely formulated even in his early books, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, and *A Critique of Abstract Principles*.[8]

Solovyov's study of West European philosophy impressed upon him that philosophy, considered as a subject in isolation from the insights of positive religion and from science, provides man with an abstract and unsatisfying picture of the world. From the very outset, Solovyov worked to evolve a philosophy that would accommodate traditional Christian teaching at its very centre. He wished to establish that a true recognition of positive religion, philosophy and science, and a recognition of their inter-relation, would help man, and would help him specifically to make the transition from abstract knowledge to *integral*, unifying knowledge.[9]

Solovyov's ambitious project of synthesis included evaluation of the relative merit of certain influential contemporary philosophies, and included, where possible, analogies and comparisons between these and traditional Christian views.[10] By means of this approach, he tried to get beyond the one-sidedness of the commonly studied theologians and philosophers. One can respect both Solovyov's recognition of the real need for *comprehensiveness* and his readiness to work for that end. It may be taken as a measure of his success that the emphasis on the *wholeness* of man in Russian thought, and more especially the teaching on *All-Unity* (*vseedinstvo*), are directly associated with Vladimir Solovyov's name.

* * *

At this point it may be useful to recall, briefly, that Solovyov devoted himself to setting forth a *restatement* of central Christian beliefs, not to innovation. He valued the faith and Tradition of his forefathers, and he trusted that through his own work and scholarship the Christian faith might be 'justified' in the eyes of his educated readers. A distinctive feature of Solovyov's approach to Christian spirituality is his strong emphasis upon the *practical* nature of the Gospel precepts. As will become apparent in subsequent chapters, he refused to consider Christianity as a code confined solely to the individual believer; he argued that it was in the very nature of the religion that its precepts would guide *collective* humanity both towards freedom and salvation.

Solovyov participated in the scholarly controversies of his time: the apparent conflict between religious faith and acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution engaged his attention, as did contemporary discussion of the merits and defects of Positivism, Empiricism and Rationalism. He also wrote polemical articles concerning the evaluation of Peter the Great's Reforms, the destiny of the Russian nation and the worth of West European culture and values. He managed to combine active participation in the intellectual life of the late nineteenth century with an outlook that was informed by wide reading of the early Church Fathers, of pre-Christian Greek philosophy, and of numerous mystical sources. In his writings he favoured a comparative method which allowed him to explore non-Christian societies, their beliefs and religious practices, with a view to casting increasing light on the

whole Christian Tradition. He produced what is, in effect, a typology of religions, and part of my task is to analyse his classification of the major world religions.

I have already mentioned that Solovyov intended to provide his readers with a cosmology based upon religious Tradition (Chapter 1). The term 'Traditional Cosmology' poses certain difficulties for the student of religion. There is, first of all, the danger that the term may be taken in such a generalised and ill-defined sense that no area of speculative thought could be considered extraneous to it. Secondly, there is a large body of literature on the Occult, where the term 'cosmology' occurs frequently, but is seldom used in a rigorous manner. In my use of the term I am guided by the insights and methodology of Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947).[11] The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the following as a definition of *cosmology*:

> The science or theory of the Universe as an ordered whole, and of the general laws which govern it.

This definition applies equally to the body of premises and truth-claims upon which entire thought systems and religions such as Christianity, Islām or Gnosticism rest, and to the views formulated and expounded by individual philosophers. Christianity and Islām, for instance, present a picture of the universe as an eminently ordered whole, whose general laws can be discerned by men and are laws that are said to afford insights into the nature of the Creator. Individual philosophers like Plato, Aristotle or Vladimir Solovyov himself have also contributed explanations to account for regularly observable and other features of our existence that inspire awe and speculative curiosity.

I suggest that the following might be a helpful working distinction for the student of religion to bear in mind: while the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition (above) shows the meaning of 'Cosmology' generally, the distinguishing attribute of a 'Traditional Cosmology' is this, that it offers a view of an ordered universe which is intimately linked with *an ideal of spiritual attainment*. This is the sense in which I employ the words 'Traditional Cosmology' in the present study. I take Judaism, Christianity, Islām, Hinduism and Buddhism to be instances of a 'traditional' system in that sense. These religious systems each depict the universe in some sort of order (to a greater or lesser extent hierarchical), and each of these

systems undoubtedly posits an ideal of spiritual attainment. Furthermore, each of the above religious systems provides a code of practical precepts for living, and a range of means of grace, and means of instruction, all directed towards the deepening of insight, towards efficacious action and spiritual attainment.

In his book *The Meaning of History*, Nikolai Berdyaev includes an extremely thought-provoking chapter entitled 'On the Nature of the Historical: the Metaphysical and the Historical'.[12] He argues from the standpoint that history may be perceived *sub specie aeternitatis* and that it is Christian philosophy of history alone that manages to reconcile the 'metaphysical' and 'historical' dimensions of reality.[13] By contrast, he observes, the Hindu religious mind has adopted the a-historical perspective: it is dismissive of the 'historical' dimension, and places full weight on the 'metaphysical'.[14] The Oriental religious consciousness (here exemplified by Hinduism) is unable or unwilling to take due account of both dimensions, holds Berdyaev, whereas Christian consciousness embraces both the 'metaphysical' and the 'historical'.

Here, in this work, Berdyaev confronts some of the central issues that historians, theologians and philosophers have to consider. Here I simply confine myself to mentioning these two distinct perspectives – the 'historical' and the 'metaphysical' – and also Berdyaev's observation that recognition of the 'historical' dimension caused problems for the Oriental religions.

I am fully aware of the extent to which Christian exegesis of Scripture employs historical evidence to support it, and know that in the context of Christian thought this is a legitimate way to proceed. However, reflection upon the religious philosophy and related writings of Vladimir Solovyov has, to an increasing extent, pressed upon my attention the possibility that his use of historical argument is subject to considerable criticism. I have adduced material in Chapter 9 to support the claim that cultural considerations and unsubstantiated value-judgements mar Solovyov's account of religious life in ancient China.[15] What must cause concern to the theologian and the student of comparative religion is the extent of Solovyov's reliance upon cultural and historical criteria in his assessment of the Chinese religious ideal. Contemplative spirituality does feature in his exploration of different cultures and their values, but his scorn for the achievements of Eastern contemplatives contrasts greatly with his evident receptivity in other areas of religious life and practice.

As has already been mentioned in Chapter 1, my study of Solovyov's religious philosophy has led me to a rather wider consideration of Negative Theology and 'the contemplative knowledge of God'. Increasingly, I have written with the hope that a wider circle of Christian believers may come to appreciate the worth of contemplative spirituality as the soundest possible basis for efficacious and compassionate action. There are some indications that this hope is not entirely groundless: namely, the renewal of serious interest in the practice of the Jesus Prayer; the desire among numerous discerning Christians for the official rehabilitation of Meister Eckhart's teachings on the spiritual life; the awakening of interest in monastic life and spirituality that was brought about by publication of Thomas Merton's writings.

I am wholly convinced that we need to reach towards a spirituality in which responsibility and mindful reflection determine action. It is not an easy course to take, and the present conditions in which most of us live are not conducive to attainment of that position. Our first need is to resist the multiple forms of distraction and trivialisation whereby our powers of concentration are depleted and rendered more or less ineffective.

Certain works of art (in Coomaraswamy's view, 'iconographically true' works of art)[16] may serve as a focus for our attention. In her book *The Sovereignty of Good*, Iris Murdoch considers this point at some length, and her discussion of the matter is illuminating:

> The freedom which is a proper human goal is the freedom from fantasy, that is the realism of compassion. What I have called fantasy, the proliferation of blinding self-centred aims and images, is itself a powerful system of energy, and most of what is often called 'will' or 'willing' belongs to this system. What counteracts the system is attention to reality inspired by, consisting of, love. In the case of art and nature such attention is immediately rewarded by the enjoyment of beauty. In the case of morality, although there are sometimes rewards, the idea of a reward is out of place. Freedom is not strictly the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action.[17]

It is Murdoch's conviction that

> . . . great art teaches us how real things can be looked at and loved without being seized and used, without being appropriated into

> the greedy organism of the self. This exercise of *detachment* is difficult and valuable, whether the thing contemplated is a human being or the root of a tree or the vibration of a colour or a sound. Unsentimental contemplation of nature exhibits the same quality of detachment: selfish concerns vanish, nothing exists except the things which are seen. Beauty is that which attracts this particular sort of unselfish attention. It is obvious here what is the role, for the artist or spectator, of exactness and good vision: unsentimental, detached, unselfish, objective attention. It is also clear that in moral situations a similar exactness is called for.[18]

Iris Murdoch might have added, at this point, that another sphere in which exactness is required is the responsible use of language. This would certainly be consistent with the spirit in which the *mystics* treated language, reserving speech for those occasions when they could indeed impart something valuable about their own religious experience, and refraining from injudicious statements about matters that were truly 'inexpressible'.

(One should not omit to mention, here, the potency of the *poet*'s word and vision, faith in which sustained Russian and East European figures especially, Osip Mandel'shtam for one, in the periods of fiercest oppression.)

Contemplation and action stand in a reciprocal relationship to one another. The fear of quietism induces some sections of the Christian community to focus too exclusively upon active spirituality and thus to deprive themselves of the benefit that contemplative spirituality might confer on them. A balanced appreciation of both forms is called for. This is true in the case of the Hindu, Buddhist and other Traditions also, if their emphasis is to remain 'practical' in the very fullest sense of the word. Each of the major religious Traditions has its own appropriate terms and language for the transmission of spiritual truths, as well as a range of symbols adequate for their transmission. The end in view is the fullest possible reconciliation between spiritual precepts and practice, on the one hand, and on the other hand, one's direct experience of life itself. This is very lucidly conveyed by an exponent of Buddhist contemplative disciplines, Nyanaponika Thera. Although he uses the terminology specific to Buddhist thought and ethics, the principle that he invokes has relevance for adherents to other Traditions, not least the Christian Tradition:

> . . . Wherever circumstances allow one to attend mindfully and

thoughtfully to any occurrence, big or small, one should relate it to the Four [Noble] Truths. In this manner one will be able to come closer to the postulate that *life should become one with the spiritual practice and practice become full-blooded life.* Thus the world of common experience that is so 'talkative' where physical and mental grasping or rejecting are concerned, but quite mute as to the language of liberating insight, will become more and more 'articulate' and evocative as to the eternal voice of the *Dhamma.*[19] (Author's italics)

4

The Central Teachings of Solovyov – I

Vladimir Solovyov aimed to restate traditional Christian teaching in a form accessible and appealing to the educated Orthodox laity of his time. Wide-ranging though his writings on Christianity are, it is plain that he could not give equal emphasis to all branches of Christian thought and tradition. His understanding of the New Testament was valuable in many senses, and his writings stress some centrally important features of Christian spirituality. He stressed, for instance, that Christ preached a message of *universal* salvation and freedom for man; he taught that Christian values should be implemented throughout society, but in such a way as to preserve the worth and autonomy of the individual; he further taught that Christian teaching is concerned with *active love* (*deyatel'naya lyubov'*)[1] and with awakening in man the aspiration to 'be perfect'. Here, and in the following chapter, it is my purpose to clarify the central terms in Solovyov's religious vocabulary and to mention those questions which most preoccupied him and led him to his affirmation of spiritual values.

Solovyov's earliest reflections on religious themes that he committed to writing (available in his published correspondence) concern the imperfect state of the created world and man's dissatisfaction with time-bound, death-bound natural existence. In his early letters, and elsewhere,[2] he describes man as a conscious being, able to perceive and experience natural life as deficient and essentially unsatisfying. Man requires satisfaction of his various needs, and if, in acting to fulfil these, he is restrained by the conflicting will and actions of others who seek to fulfil their own needs, he experiences that restraint as a form of suffering.[3] His scope for action and for assertion of his will is limited by the activity of others. Solovyov stresses that man can only rectify his position (and attain true satisfaction) if he finds a point of reference and support (*opora*) *outside* the natural order.[4]

In the animal kingdom an existence which is confined to satisfaction of physiological needs and instincts and to conflict over the limited resources of food and living space is the given and inalterable 'norm'.[5] There is no impulse to deviate from such a 'norm' or pattern of existence – it is the 'given' condition in which animals live. Solovyov argues that conscious, rational man cannot, by his very nature, remain content to live on this rudimentary level: 'While an animal strives only to *live*, in man there appears the will to live *as duty requires*'.[6] If man's will and activity are restrained by others, and this condition causes him to suffer, then he will use his rational and other faculties to terminate or reduce that suffering as far as possible, and to find a manner of living more conducive to satisfaction. Even if rational man proves unable to effect a complete end to his suffering or a removal of conflict and of all that causes him to suffer, his very *consciousness* that these features of his existence are unacceptable places him *above* the level of beings that passively accept this condition and cannot do otherwise.[7]

A survey of man's activities shows that he has resorted to, and experimented with, a wide range of remedies to alleviate the ills of natural existence, remedies as various as hedonism, intoxication, the acquisition and exercise of power, suicide, resignation to the limits of this existence, and so forth. In his *Justification of the Good* (1897) Solovyov examined the viability of some of these as solutions to man's present, undesirable state. Their efficacy for the *individual* has to be considered – that is, whether they really remove the root causes of individuals' suffering or whether, by somehow obscuring the root causes, they offer only temporary satisfaction and a further re-subjection to suffering. These various 'solutions' available to man require evaluation not solely on the basis of their suitability (or supposed suitability) for the individual. Accordingly, Solovyov also considers how viable they are when given *universal* application. For Solovyov, just as for Kant, courses of action derive validity from their possible universal application: that is, if a certain course of action or a certain way of proceeding, when elevated into a principle or imperative binding upon all men everywhere, yields desirable results, then that course of action could rightly be approved. Suicide may at times appeal to individuals as an extreme solution to their problems, yet it would not occur to any reasonable person to elevate this action into a universally applicable imperative for all men. While Solovyov rejects suicide as an appropriate course of action even for the

individual (a judgement that one would naturally expect from a Christian), he refrains from outright condemnation of those attracted to suicide, for the following reason.[8] Regrettable as an individual's decision to take his own life may be, it is the case, argues Solovyov, that the prospective suicide's dissatisfaction with his present circumstances depends, at least in part, upon an awareness (however slight and obscure) that a qualitatively better existence *is* possible, and therefore one should not resign oneself to the present, unsatisfactory conditions of one's life. Even if this awareness is not consciously or coherently formulated, it is nevertheless a significant element in the complex of motives that impel someone to take his own life. Solovyov attached paramount importance to the consistent application of Christian ethics to all spheres of men's activities, for he took the precepts of the Gospels to be our most adequate and efficacious means of ensuring the welfare of all, safeguarding the autonomy of individuals and balancing this with the needs of the collective, the need for social cohesion, justly administered law, and so forth. These are all central considerations in Solovyov's delineation of his religious philosophy. He taught that Christianity presented man with an ideal of unanimity and community that is quite distinct in essence.

To highlight the uniqueness and the merits of the Christian social ideal, he contrasts the Christian approach to the welfare of collective humanity with important, historically influential secular approaches. He cites at least three examples of peoples or movements that have offered and tried out secular criteria for the ordering of society. The three groups considered by Solovyov were the Romans, the French revolutionaries of 1789, and, thirdly, the advocates of Socialism and other more or less radical social theorists. Solovyov was careful to acknowledge the positive insights and achievements of these groups, but he also drew attention to the weaknesses in their views and practical approaches. It was his view that they could not, through *their* chosen means of government, attain the positive results which adherence to a true Christian model of government could bring about. More specifically, Solovyov wrote that the Romans elaborated their own secular code of *justice*,[9] which had considerable merits; the Roman ideal of justice was not, in his view, as beneficial as the Christian principles of mercy (*miloserdie*), charity and love, but he conceded that through the Romans' emphasis upon the *universal* application of their code of justice they had

achieved impressively high standards of social order.[10] The leading spirits of the French Revolution stressed the value of civic rights and the need for freedom and equality,[11] but, on Solovyov's account, the new rule they inaugurated could not ensure men's welfare. The revolutionaries' exclusive reliance upon purely secular principles, and the imbalance of their views and practical goals, spoilt their enterprise. Thirdly, advocates of Socialism and other social theorists have offered schemes for the organisation of society,[12] but Solovyov showed that their claims to bring about a just distribution of property were not as firmly founded upon 'moral' principles as they themselves supposed. Solovyov's discussion of the Roman, the revolutionary and the Socialist viewpoints was intended to show how these were fundamentally different from the Christian conception of society and 'community'.

The imbalance evident in the schemes of the secular social theorists (such as Proudhon, Fourier and the various advocates of Socialism) was, for Solovyov, but one instance of man's general tendency to give credence to – and act upon – one-sided, exclusive views. This tendency operates in all spheres of activity, in philosophy no less than in politics or religious observance, and in his works the Russian philosopher exposed the negative effects that adoption of exclusive viewpoints can cause. It hardly needs to be pointed out that, in the interests of objectivity, he aspired to gain as comprehensive an outlook as possible on philosophical and other problems. But in addition to this wholly natural desire for objectivity, the special emphasis that he placed upon *comprehensiveness* of viewpoint is a distinctive feature of Solovyov's philosophical thought. Both during and since his lifetime, a general appreciation of Solovyov's insistence upon this comprehensiveness of viewpoint has significantly helped in winning a lasting recognition for his achievements in philosophy.

For the purposes of further clarification, to show how he underlined the need for comprehensiveness, I will cite certain examples from his critical examination of some familiar theological and philosophical views and, secondly, from his criticism of historical movements that adopted extreme religious or political positions.

In his *Lectures on Godmanhood* (*Chteniya o bogochelovechestve*) Solovyov juxtaposes the viewpoints of *Deism* and *Pantheism*,[13] and criticises both of these as one-sided and deficient accounts of the nature of God. The Deists stress the transcendent aspect of God, and

their account wholly excludes God's immanence in the created world; the Pantheists perceive God's immanence in the world, but deny His transcendent aspect. The Deist and the Pantheist views are, then, mutually exclusive, each valuable in what they perceive about the nature of God, but misleading in their exclusive affirmation of what they have perceived. Solovyov asks:

> Is it necessary to understand God either as only a separate being or as only the general substance of worldly phenomena? On the contrary, the very conception of God as a whole and complete [absolute] eliminates both one-sided definitions and opens the way to another viewpoint . . .[14]

In the field of religious perception and of accounts of Divine–human relations Solovyov mounted a sustained attack upon what he regarded as 'absolute dualism'. His targets were Islām and Zoroastrianism, Platonism and the major faiths of the Indian spiritual Tradition, namely Buddhism and Hinduism.

HIS CRITIQUE OF ABSOLUTE DUALISM

1. Solovyov specifically objected to the Islamic interpretation of the world order (and to the similarly dualistic Zoroastrian viewpoint) on the grounds that these conceived of God's transcendence exclusively, stressing the separation between God and His creatures. Although reflection upon the transcendent aspect of God may be very salutary for the believer's spiritual life (instilling in him a due sense of awe and veneration), if the believer has very little hope of redemption from his 'creaturely' condition, then the motivation to adhere to spiritual precepts is much diminished. Solovyov held that, as it lacked the doctrine of 'Godmanhood' (*bogochelovechestvo*), Islām could not offer believers in that religion such assurances of salvation as Christianity can offer.[15] Because of the Incarnation of the God-man, Jesus Christ, among men, Christianity is not obliged to assert a rigid and extreme separation of the sacred and the mundane, nor of the Divine Creator and creaturely beings.
2. While Solovyov appreciated many aspects of Platonic thought, in the final analysis he criticised Plato's idealist philosophy on

account of a too rigid separation of the ideal and the phenomenal spheres. (For a fuller treatment of this subject, see Chapter 8.)

3. In Solovyov's view, the major spiritual teachings originating in India, Buddhism and Hinduism, served men well in that they expressed in very clear and powerful terms the essentially unsatisfying quality of natural, earthly existence.[16] They stressed man's susceptibility to disease, sorrow, death, the pain of being parted from pleasurable but transient experiences, and so forth. To this extent, argues Solovyov, they showed a penetrating understanding of the human condition, and the teachers of the various Indian faiths were correct in their premise that awareness of the undesirability of earthly existence could give a powerful impetus to men to make progress in the spiritual life.

   It is Solovyov's thesis that this was as far as the Indians' positive, beneficial insights went. He conceded that they diagnosed men's ills and that they offered a variety of ascetic or other disciplines to assist men in overcoming suffering. However, Solovyov judged that the 'remedies' offered by the Indian spiritual philosophies, and the disciplines founded on them, yielded only pantheistic contemplation, or concentration on the Void or on 'non-being',[17] and that ultimately they entailed an irresponsible and non-compassionate, selfish renunciation of one's responsibilities towards 'the world'. This was, in his view, another form of absolute dualism, an undue separation of the spheres of 'the spiritual' and 'the secular'. As Solovyov perceived the matter, men who took up these philosophies were electing to pursue their own personal salvation and giving up the opportunity to transform and qualitatively improve secular society. (For a fuller treatment of Solovyov's views on this subject, see Chapters 6, 8 and 9.)

One of Solovyov's most widely known works, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* (*Krizis zapadnoy filosofii*), is devoted to criticism of the extreme forms of Empiricism and Rationalism, the two major directions in which West European philosophy was developing. The Empiricists' claim that all knowledge was founded on sensation, and Hegel's claim that all knowledge was founded solely on the forms of Reason, are untenable; Solovyov argues this case, stressing that Hegel's elevation of Reason is neither legitimate, nor does it yield philosophically acceptable results. The Empiricists' elevation of sensation is similarly illegitimate and unrewarding

from the philosophical point of view.[18] The former system, which Solovyov called 'pan-logism' (*pan-logizm*), offers pure thought without a thinking subject or any specific content of thought; the latter system offers pure sensation without a sensing subject and devoid of specific content.[19] These conclusions are, as the author says, 'inconceivable' (*nemyslimy*), hence West European philosophy, in adopting the premises of these two speculative systems, could be demonstrated to be pursuing a fundamentally unrewarding direction. It was an argument and conclusion extremely congenial to the Slavophiles.

The examples cited above come from the fields of theology and philosophy. My further examples of Solovyov's arguments regarding exclusive viewpoints are instances where the philosopher examines religious movements that have appeared in the course of history and whose fortunes have been connected with the application of, and adherence to, one or other extreme, exclusive viewpoint. One might distinguish the two forms of exclusivity that Solovyov criticises in the following way:

(a) exclusive elevation of a theoretical viewpoint or principle (e.g. in Hegel's 'pan-logism');
(b) exclusive *practical* application of a theoretical principle that is in itself acceptable.

In line with conventional interpretations of the emergence of Protestantism, Solovyov believed there to be very substantial grounds justifying a stand against the central 'authority' of the Roman Catholic Church, a stand that was, moreover, in the name of the individual's spiritual integrity and freedom. The temptations of the Catholic hierarchy to abuse the authority which it bore were significantly checked after the Protestants successfully established the principles of individualism and personal responsibility in interpretation of the Scriptures.[20] The Protestants' corrective to the undue emphasis upon central ecclesiastical authority in the Church of Rome was both necessary and welcome, and important ground was gained by the Protestants' affirmation of the worth of personal faith.

Solovyov was generous in his estimation of what Protestantism achieved, but he came to think that the Protestants elevated their individualism and their right to express their personal faith into 'absolute' principles.[21] Their rejection of central Church 'authority'

became correspondingly extreme and 'absolute', and in this Solovyov felt them to be fundamentally misguided and duly subject to criticism.

He developed his observations on the significance of Protestantism in an interesting manner, by means of an historical parallel between the Protestants of Western Europe and the Old Believers in Russia.[22] Like the Protestants who found fault with the exercise of central authority in the Roman Catholic Church, so, in Russia, those who came to set themselves apart from the Orthodox Church and regarded themselves as Old Believers (*starovertsy*) had very considerable grounds for objecting to the conduct of Patriarch Nikon and to the arbitrary way in which his reforms of ritual were imposed and made obligatory for members of the Russian Church. The Old Believers' resistance to Nikon's Greek reforms in the 1650s was in one sense a morally correct response; but their counter-arguments were themselves somewhat arbitrary.[23] Their preference for rites that had only been officially sanctioned by a decree in the relatively recent past,[24] a decree issued in Russia, could not be convincingly presented as having superior claims to tradition and authentic Christian practice than the claims made on behalf of Nikon's reforms. As the historical accounts show, the Old Believers were obstinate in their resistance, adhering to the 'Russian' rites; the conflict became an open one, in which significantly large numbers broke away from the Orthodox Church, this movement being called the Schism or *Raskol*.

Solovyov argued that the Old Believers' Schism bears the same significance in the context of Russia that Protestantism bears in Western Europe. He quite specifically called the Schism '*Russia's Protestantism*'.[25] For the sake of clarification, he writes, in his article on the Schism, that whereas the European Protestants manifested their obstinacy and spiritual pride in the 'absolutisation' of their principles of individualism and personal faith, the Old Believers in Russia showed a similar measure of obstinacy and spiritual pride by placing their 'local' Russian liturgical rites above the interests of Church *unity*, that unity which was preached in the Gospels.[26] However provoked they were by Patriarch Nikon's arbitrary and authoritarian ways, the Old Believers could themselves be justly charged with an extreme and exclusive application of the free right to resist ecclesiastical, centralised 'authority' imposed by means of force.

Solovyov's arguments against exclusivity in either theory or

practice are striking for their lucidity. This was not merely a subject to which he returned frequently, but was the central theme of two major early works, *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* and *A Critique of Abstract Principles*.[27] This emphasis characterised his work in the field of epistemology.

It should be noted that the mutual misunderstandings and conflicts between men that arise from their adoption of dogmatic and exclusive views of the world are, on Solovyov's account, an important aspect of men's present earthly condition, the condition of *alienation* (*otchuzhdenie*). The Incarnation of the God-man, Jesus Christ, among men, can alone counteract the effects of this alienation, is the eminent means of salvation from creaturely existence. Alienation, and that which promotes alienation, is associated by Solovyov specifically with the principle of evil:

> The essence of the world's evil consists in the alienation and discord of all beings, in their mutual opposition and incompatibility.[28]

In Egypt in 1876 Solovyov personally experienced a foretaste of the universal harmony that awaits creaturely beings 'in the fullness of time'. For reasons that will be mentioned below (Chapter 5), he insisted that this harmonious state is not, and could not rightly be, *immediately* accessible to man: founding his arguments on certain central ideas in Friedrich Schelling's historiography and his interpretation of the 'Fall' of man from Eden,[29] Solovyov argues that conscious man cannot be *compelled* to accept an ideal state of harmony, however desirable that state itself may be and however much man may eventually aspire to attain it when prompted by his own will. In the Solovyovian scheme (for which Schelling's arguments serve as a critically important model), human history must be permitted to run its proper course, and conscious man must be given the opportunity *freely* to take the initiative in affirming the need for harmony in the created order and then in working actively to attain that harmony. Christian thought is distinctive in that it provides for this *voluntary* acceptance of ideal harmony – such is Solovyov's understanding. His references to Christianity as providing both a goal (*tsel'*) and a summation (*zavershenie*)[30] relate to this provision for the full *unfolding* and development of the historical process. Isolated individuals may be granted a privileged, but all the same fleeting, foretaste of the

universal harmony to come, as was the case for Solovyov himself. This perception of harmony was the subject matter of the poem *Three Meetings* (*Tri svidaniya*) and of certain other poems. The vision in the Egyptian desert is described not simply as a view of future time, but is, quite specifically, a *simultaneous* experience of past, present and future times:

> What is, what has been, what is yet to come,
> My unmoving gaze embraced all this . . .
> Below me seas and rivers appear blue,
> And the distant forest also, and snow-capped mountains.
>
> I saw everything, everything was just one,
> Just one image of feminine beauty . . .[31]

Another very explicit poem *To Prometheus* (*Prometeyu*) mentions a beatific state in terms which leave little doubt of Solovyov's first-hand experience of such a state:

> . . . When you know the blessedness of reconciliation . . .
> Then comes the hour – the final hour of creation . . .
> Barriers are sundered, fetters are melted
> By the divine fire,
> And the eternal dawn of a new life rises
> In all, and all in One.[32]

Lines such as these not only testify to the nature of his religious perception, but also convey his deep and confident faith in the ultimate victory of the Good. In Solovyov's view, affirmations of this kind are grounded in *faith*, they are a 'feat of faith' (*podvig very*),[33] and this capacity to believe in the triumph of the inapparent Good is intimately associated with the *prophetic* type of man. While it is open to all men to deepen their own faith and thus find confidence and affirm the ultimate realization of the Good, Solovyov on various occasions warns that it is spiritually dangerous, as well as presumptuous, to claim prophetic insight unless one has undergone a serious moral preparation:

> According to the authentic Christian as well as the Judaic conception, the prophetic vocation requires a high degree of piety and particular moral achievements . . .[34]

In Solovyov's model of theocratic government the Prophet is one of three figures representing 'authority'; therefore a fuller consideration of the prophetic type and his vocation is provided under the heading of *Theocracy* in Chapter 5.

Having alluded to Solovyov's personal experience of universal harmony and to the heightened perceptions and faith of the Prophet, it is necessary to resume the explanation of Solovyov's work in epistemology. His work focused very greatly on *normal* perception and on the various philosophical and psychological accounts of the way we acquire knowledge. His proposition that *faith* is an element in human knowledge (even in that which is not specifically 'religious', but simply seeks assurances regarding the very *existence* of the external world beyond the thinking, sensing subject himself) has not won wide assent. But aside from this, his lengthy studies of Cartesian, Empiricist and numerous other theories of knowledge are rigorous and scholarly works commanding authority. He personally wrote an impressively wide range of articles to serve as entries for the prestigious *Brockhaus–Ephron Encyclopaedia,* the Philosophy Section of which was under his editorial charge between 1891 and his death in 1900.

Solovyov attacked not only the one-sidedness, the exclusivity, of particular philosophical theories, but also the one-sided and defective accounts of existence provided by whole branches of human knowledge. He believed that the insights of the theologian, the philosopher and the natural scientist may be extremely penetrating in their own respective fields and yet may prove deficient and unfruitful, due to their lack of reference to other branches of knowledge. He did not consider it appropriate for the theologian to ignore the findings of the natural scientist or the philosopher, nor that any of these three specialists should regard their own work as self-sufficient. If the theologian feared that his account of existence would be negated by the findings of contemporary thought and science, this fear, argued Solovyov, was actually unwarranted. He himself stressed that developments in scientific thought and the views reached by the scientist in effect *support* the religious viewpoint rather than negate it. In his *Lectures on Godmanhood* he directly asserted that although a number of prominent philosophies originating from Western Europe were themselves due to fundamental criticism on account of their negative premises, their very appearance allowed men of other cultures (and particularly in Russia) to *perceive* the defects in those

philosophies, and subsequently to produce their own more positive and well-founded philosophies.[35] The appearance of negative thought systems in Western Europe served as a necessary impetus, then, for the formulation of philosophies based upon positive principles, philosophies that recognised the centrality of religious perception and revealed truth.

It is in the context of these views that Solovyov came to feel the need for a *synthesis* of the major branches of knowledge, and in particular a synthesis of theology, philosophy and natural science.[36] He came to form a view of knowledge as *organic* in character, that is to say, he considered the constituent branches of knowledge to be related to one another in an organic sense, that each has defined and particular functions (as do the constituent organs of a living body), and *this* is the reason why the task of synthesis is especially exacting. If men are really to *benefit* from the bringing together of theology, philosophy and science, then, insists Solovyov, the simple external amassing of data from each respective discipline is not acceptable. On the other hand, a true synthesis of knowledge from these fields, a synthesis based upon a recognition of the kind of discourse operative in each respective field, and upon a recognition of the principles and methodology appropriate to each, would permit man to end his reliance upon excessively one-sided and abstract accounts of reality. He could, by means of a properly formulated synthesis, replace the range of abstract, deficient and mutually exclusive accounts of the world order with an *integral knowledge* (*tsel'noe znanie*).[37] Solovyov's attitude to the passing relevance of abstract knowledge is expressed in the clearest terms at the very beginning of his first major work *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, published in 1874:

> At the heart of this book lay the conviction that philosophy in the sense of abstract *exclusively* theoretical knowledge has finished its development and has passed irrevocably into the world of the past.[38] (Solovyov's italics)

5

The Central Teachings of Solovyov – II

Chapter 4 covered four aspects of Vladimir Solovyov's religious thought and experience. These were as follows:

1. his perception of natural, earthly, physical existence as unsatisfying for men;
2. his view of Christianity as a teaching that offers unique and distinct precepts for organising men's lives and social relations;
3. his own visions of universal harmony;
4. his concern with epistemology and with criticism of exclusive philosophies.

Having provided a thematic treatment of central issues that confronted Solovyov, it is now necessary to explain the principal terms that he employed in his discussion of religious ideas.

PERFECTIBILITY – SOVERSHENSTVOVANIE

Solovyov accepted the worth and importance of what is possibly one of Christ's most paradoxical teachings, that is, His command to men: 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt. 5, 48). This command or precept from the Gospels has, naturally, been the subject of extensive Biblical commentary and of rival interpretations;[1] yet it retains its full paradoxical force and is not, ultimately, reducible to purely human categories of understanding.

The command to 'be perfect' is most normally viewed as a precept relevant for the morality of the *individual*, as a precept intended to reinforce the individual's aspiration to deepen his spiritual practice and understanding. It also serves to remind the believer that the Christian Gospels posit a spiritual ideal for man. The natural fallibility of man is not denied or overlooked, but the need for man's

spiritual aspiration is implicitly affirmed in the command to 'be perfect'.

Solovyov was very conscious of this command: he recognised its animating force and its positive meaning for the individual. The import of the Christian teaching of perfectibility[2] for his own religious philosophy will become more apparent as his terminology is explained. Solovyov applies the notion of perfectibility as readily and consistently to *collective* humanity as to individual man. I suggest that his account of Christian values is distinctive in its treatment of the theme of 'community'. He made no claims to be innovative in this respect, for he sought to *restate* central Christian teaching. He believed and consistently taught that the Christian teaching which serves the individual's needs eminently well merits and, by its very nature, *requires* application throughout society.[3] A refusal or omission to apply this teaching to the ordering of society as well as to the individual's life was, in his view, tantamount to a denial of its general validity and efficacy.[4] To accept the imperfect condition of men's lives and social relations as 'given' and inalterable, that is, to 'bow down before the facts' of our present unsatisfactory existence[5] is, in Solovyov's view, wholly inconsistent with a true profession of Christian faith.

The Christian notion of perfectibility is critically important to man, argued Solovyov. To neglect it is to endanger the very existence of the community, to deprive the community of a critically important source of energy. He affirms this point in his essay *'Byzantinism and Russia'* (*Vizantizm i Rossiya*) of 1896:

> In an imperfect world only he who frees himself from his own imperfection is worthy of existence. Byzantium perished because it shunned the very idea of perfection. Any being, single or collective, which rejects this idea inevitably perishes.[6]

Chapter 8 will show how deeply critical a stance he adopted in his evaluation of the nominally Christian society of Byzantium. He described it as a 'nominally' Christian society, as distinct from an authentically Christian society, because, in his view, the Byzantine clergy attached such inordinate value to external forms of ritual and to dogma, and complacently disregarded the Christian ideal of perfection, which ideal entailed a transformation of society as well as a serious commitment to the Christian principles of mercy and love. In Solovyov's philosophical scheme the notion of perfectibil-

ity is intimately connected with the terms *spiritualisation* (*odukhotvorenie*) and *transfiguration* (*preobrazovanie*). These terms are central to Christian teaching, argued Solovyov, and they refer to a universal process whereby eventually all material nature is 'redeemed': a *spiritual* aspect inheres in all forms of material being, and through Divine action and the cooperative agency of conscious man, this spiritual aspect of matter will become fully manifest. In Solovyov's view, the Jewish people perceived and properly appreciated this spiritual, sacred aspect of matter. They perceived what Solovyov called 'sacred corporeality' (*svyataya telesnost'*), and the forms of their religion testify to the importance of that perception in their outlook. The Jews' very special concern with *purification*, with setting apart the pure from the impure, is a practical consequence of this perception.[7] And, further than this, the Jews consciously sought to prepare a milieu suitable for the coming of their Messiah, that is, a milieu suitably pure and spiritual.[8] This, too, derives from their perception of 'sacred corporeality'. Solovyov observes that an awareness of 'sacred corporeality' lies at the very heart of the Christian revelation also.[9] He especially values Christianity's recognition of the 'sacred' aspect of material nature: according to the Christian account, man and the entire material order of being may be *perfected*.

Conscious man, although himself a part of material nature, is endowed with special faculties, notably with an awareness of self and an awareness of his position in the world order. The process of *perfection*, argues Solovyov, is made apparent in the course of human *history*, and man, with his capacity for self-reflection, can act to ensure that his and all society's energies are directed towards attainment of the divinely-ordained plan. Complete integration and harmony are sought,[10] that is, a condition or state which eludes man at present, but which most truly accords with his spiritual nature. Christian teaching affirms that man was made 'after the image of God' and that he must strive to make that image fully apparent.

Solovyov entirely follows the Christian view when he emphasises that man is not self-sufficient,[11] even though his will and his actions may be well-directed. Not only individual man, but the whole collective humanity, requires divine assistance. Solovyov teaches that God must act upon and enter into the historical process itself in order to 'redeem' that process and allow men to attain the ideal state for which they have been created and destined. It is not

difficult to see that this line of argument provides the basis for Solovyov's views on the Incarnation of God in the figure of Christ, nor to see why he considered Christ's mission as bearing so directly upon the historical development of mankind. These views, although overlapping with some of the philosopher's statements about the *perfectibility* of man and created nature, belong under the heading *Godmanhood* (*Bogochelovechestvo*).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD – TSARSTVO BOZHIE

Solovyov went back to first sources and followed the New Testament in associating Christ's mission and teachings directly with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is, as the Gospels affirm, wholly unlike the temporal kingdom of the Roman Caesars; nor is it the form of nationhood that the Jewish people wished to realize.[12] Christ affirmed that the Kingdom of God would be made real on earth, and He instructed His followers to pray for the coming of the Kingdom.

In Solovyov's writings the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth is presented as an ordering of all aspects of life (individual and communal life) according to Christian principles. Furthermore, this enterprise of conforming earthly life to its heavenly model should be animated by the spirit of Christian love (*agapé*). This ideal, heavenly order is not imposed on man; rather, it is intended to *free* him from the purely natural level of existence, which is itself restrictive for man. Only with the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth does man attain his full stature, overcoming the natural state of alienation (*otchuzhdenie*) and attaining 'plenitude of being' (*polnota bytiya*). The *natural* mode of earthly existence, which comprises alienation, mutual hostility, rivalry of interests (individual, class and national interests)[13] harms and diminishes man, obscures the 'image of God' in him.

In Solovyov's view, the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth requires the fulfilment of certain conditions. At the heart of these conditions lie a recognition of the supreme worth of the individual and a recognition of man's need for freedom.

According to this view, government, the Church, and men's other social institutions need to be administered so as to preserve the autonomy of individual members of the community, while legislation must be directed to defining the minimal degree of

restraint necessary for the general welfare and freedom of all.[14] Solovyov's more detailed specifications regarding the structure of a model Christian society will be set out below, under the heading *Theocracy* (*Teokratiya*). However, it should be noted, here, that the striving for unity and reconciliation among men – without which the Kingdom of God could not be realized on earth – features as the central idea informing the philosopher's practical schemes for the reunification of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. In his view, Christian believers could not sincerely profess faith in the Gospel teachings if they wilfully ignored opportunities to bring the divided Churches together, for the Gospels proclaimed the need for unity, while the continued hostility and misunderstandings between the Churches belied the principle of unity.

The foregoing introductory observations regarding Solovyov's conception of the *Kingdom of God* bear out the words of Ernest Radlov in his biographical study of the philosopher:

> [The Kingdom of God, according to Solovyov] consists of people ceasing to be *only* people, entering onto a new, higher level of existence, on which their purely human tasks become just the means for another, ultimate goal.[15]

In the very last years of the philosopher's life (1898–1900), with the growing prominence of his apocalyptic views, the likelihood or even the possibility of the realization of the Kingdom of God *within* the framework of human history appeared increasingly remote. But the actual *substance* of his ideas regarding the Kingdom of God did not change. Ernest Radlov writes:

> The views of Vladimir Solovyov on the Kingdom of God remained unchanged throughout the time of his literary activity.[16]

SACRED CORPOREALITY – SVYATAYA TELESNOST'

In his *Lectures on Godmanhood* Solovyov observes that physical matter may be known by its characteristic quality of *impenetrability* (*nepronitsaemost'*).[17] This quality or condition of matter dictates that two physical, material bodies may not occupy one and the same

space at the same time: they mutually resist and exclude one another.

Solovyov maintains that the mutual resistance and exclusion that we find on this rudimentary physical level of existence is evident throughout the natural order, including human life. Humans experience this mutual resistance and exclusion in the form of conflicting personal wills and in restraints upon the exercise and assertion of their own will. This is the natural and unsatisfying condition into which men are born, and the continuing self-assertion of individuals only aggravates that condition, for the successful self-assertion of one individual or group of individuals entails the restraint of others. The satisfaction of their separate and respective wills is mutually exclusive. Such is Solovyov's line of argument. In his book *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* he writes of *original sin* as being the force which makes us 'impenetrable', 'closed' to others, 'exclusive' and isolated:

> In the depth of our being, in the very core of our soul, hides the force of original sin – in a way entirely unknown to us – and it acts secretly, a dark force, senseless and evil. It is this very force which separates us from everything and from all, locks us in ourselves, makes us impenetrable and non-transparent; it is a senseless force and the principle of all senselessness, for, in separating us from everything, it breaks any bond [between us and] the Divine world, deprives us of contact with everything and impedes our true relationship with everything which constitutes the rational sense (*ratio*) of our life.[18]

In Solovyov's scheme the counterparts of resistance and impenetrability are – at all levels of the natural and spiritual order – openness and receptivity (*vospriimnost'*). Solovyov's various statements about *sacred corporeality* (*svyataya telesnost'*) are intended to establish that physical, created matter is indeed receptive to spiritual influence.

It is very noteworthy that Solovyov firmly rejected the viewpoint of Gnosticism, according to which material nature is itself a principle of evil. He discerned this negative view of material nature in other philosophies also, and is consistent in his criticism of it: we find such criticism in works as far apart as the *Lectures on Godmanhood*[19] of 1877–81 and his 1891 lecture *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*. In the latter of these Solovyov affirms:

> Christianity is *the religion of the Divine Incarnation and the resurrection of the flesh*; but they have turned it into some kind of Oriental dualism, rejecting material nature as an evil principle.[20] (Solovyov's italics)

Solovyov's point was taken up and affirmed by Vladimir Lossky in his *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*:

> The body should not be an obstacle in mystical experience. The manichean contempt for our bodily nature is alien to orthodox asceticism.[21]

Solovyov holds that material nature is to be 'redeemed'. This positive attitude is very prominent in his *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*. The following two excerpts serve to underline man's *participatory* role in the task of universal redemption:

> As the incarnate God saves humanity, so humanity united with God must save all nature.[22]
>
> The true task of our life of the senses is to cultivate the garden of the earth, to convert the dead into the living, to confer upon earthly beings greater intensity and fulness of life – to *animate* them.[23]

This positive acceptance of matter and of material nature generally is not a stance that we readily associate with Christian asceticism. Solovyov linked asceticism with wider issues of morality, and urged that men (who are conscious and also free beings) should pursue their spiritual quest with the knowledge that they indeed bear a responsibility for the condition of the natural world.[24] Men should, he says, remain mindful that 'the whole natural world should become the living body of regenerated humanity'.[25]

Solovyov did not claim that this insight belongs solely to Christian teaching. It was, in his view, Jewish spirituality which revealed the worth of this positive acceptance of matter. The Jews firmly believed that matter *could* be sanctified, and they incorporated this belief into the very heart of their religious life and rituals.[26] They perceived the need to prepare for the coming of their Messiah by improving and 'making holy' all aspects of their life and

social relations. The Christian view is that the very process of human *historical development* is 'sanctified' by the Divine Incarnation in the God-man Jesus Christ. God enters the historical process so as to redeem *natural man*, the First Adam. Solovyov attaches utmost importance to this 'sanctification' of the historical process which is, in effect, also a 'justification'.

In *Judaism and the Christian Question* (*Evreystvo i khristianskiy vopros*, 1884) Solovyov delineates the religious outlook of the Jews, with special reference to their inability to accept any *absolute* separation of spirit and matter:

> The Jews, true to their own religion, fully admitting the spiritual aspect of the Divinity and the divine aspect of the human soul, could not and did not want to *separate* these higher principles from their material expression, from their bodily form and cover, from their ultimate and finite realization . . . [The Jew] believes in the spirit, but only in such [a spirit] which penetrates everything material, which uses matter as its own cover and as its own instrument.[27] (Solovyov's italics)

Solovyov's writings on this theme reveal what great importance he attached to the notion of 'sacred corporeality'. This was, indeed, one of the central terms he employed to convey the intimacy and directness of the relationship between God and His creation. These passages also show that the Russian philosopher felt a deep affinity with the Jews and their approach to spiritual matters. He was mindful of the continuity between Judaic and Christian religious thought, and acknowledged that the Jews' religious perceptions (notably the view of the Absolute as Personal, and the notion of sacred corporeality) have greatly enriched mankind.

A striking example of Solovyov's appreciation of Jewish spirituality and traditions occurs in his essay 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it': here he provides a whole line of argument with which sincere Jews might answer their Christian critics.[28] Not only does the philosopher commend the Jews' observance of their own law, but he also sharply criticises contemporary Christians' indifference to social justice and to the proper, *full* application of the Christian code to society as a whole.

The extent to which Solovyov accepted sacred corporeality as a valid and important religious idea is particularly clear in his *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* and in *Judaism and the Christian*

Question. Here, also, he remains firm in his opposition to philosophies which wholly separate spirit from matter, reject matter as an evil principle, or even devalue the natural faculties of man. This special emphasis in his religious outlook enabled him to provide a general definition of the goal of *asceticism* which is striking for its avoidance of the common view that the flesh must simply be 'mortified'. Solovyov's definition also brings us to discussion of another term in his religious vocabulary, namely *transfiguration* (*preobrazovanie*, or *preobrazhenie*):

> The goal of Christian asceticism is not a weakening of the flesh, but *a strengthening of the spirit with a view to a transfiguration of the flesh*.[29] (Solovyov's italics)

As we can see, for Solovyov discussion of the notion of sacred corporeality entailed consideration of the nature and main goal of asceticism. The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (edited by James Hastings, Edinburgh 1925) contains an illuminating definition of asceticism:

> The word asceticism when used in the sphere of religion and ethics denotes self-preparation for a virtuous course of conduct, the zealous practice of acts of devotion and morality. There does appear to be inherent in both the Old Testament and the New Testament stages of revelation an element of asceticism. This consists in the urgent demand for an earnest combating of sin and a complete resignation to the holy will of God.[30]

It is to be noted that this definition of asceticism includes three notions central to Solovyov's religious philosophy: namely, the need for moral virtue, the earnest combating of sin and evil (see Chapter 6), and surrender to the will of God.

TRANSFIGURATION – PREOBRAZOVANIE, PREOBRAZHENIE[31]

Jesus Christ's mission on earth was a *redemptive* one, and the various episodes in His life are recounted in such a way, in the Gospels, as to deepen our understanding of one or other aspect of His ministry. Prominent among these was the Transfiguration of

Christ, the awesome appearance of Christ's body wholly transfused with light (Luke 9, 28–36). The three Apostles chosen to witness this Transfiguration were overcome by the intensest feelings of awe and by an awareness of Christ's spiritual power, perceptible in the form of light. According to Vladimir Lossky

> This light or effulgence can be defined as the visible quality of the divinity, of the energies or grace in which God makes Himself known.[32]

Prior to this event the Apostles had seen only the human form of Christ, externally similar to other men. Lossky stresses that the light radiating from Christ's body was quite unlike any created light familiar to men, and that the impact of this vision was almost too powerful for the Apostles to bear – 'a terrifying and unbearable apparition to created beings, because foreign and external to human nature as it was before Christ and outside the Church'.[33]

Lossky underlines the essential point that the Divine Light revealed to men is not apprehended solely through the natural faculties, but through properly so-called 'mystical experience':

> The divine light is not an allegorical or abstract thing: it is given in mystical experience. . . .It is not a reality of the intellectual order, as the illumination of the intellect, taken in its allegorical and abstract sense, sometimes is. Nor is it a reality of the sensible order. This light is a light which fills at the same time both intellect and senses, revealing itself to the whole man, and not only to one of his faculties. The divine light, being given in mystical experience, surpasses at the same time both sense and intellect.[34]

Vladimir Solovyov assigned immense importance to the Transfiguration of Christ. For him the event bore confirmation of Christ's unique status[35] and His spiritual authority. But also, Solovyov considered that the Transfiguration of Christ *anticipated* the transfiguration of all material being. First it was necessary for Christ's Apostles to recognise His true, divine nature, to acknowledge that which set Him apart from the long line of Old Testament prophets and from His immediate precursor, John the Baptist. Christ was not simply a miracle-worker and prophet, but *a figure who, with His own coming, heralded a most profound qualitative change in humanity and in the whole natural order.* For conscious,

reflective man He provided an ideal of spiritual perfection towards which to aspire, and a body of teachings (notably the Sermon on the Mount) to serve as a path for the attainment of that ideal. Man, though ultimately dependent on the mercy and grace of God, could be induced to work for his own salvation. And then, if man is duly aware of his close ties with, and his obligations towards, the rest of the created, natural order,[36] he can work for the restoration and eventual 'redemption' or 'spiritualisation' (*odukhotvorenie*) of the natural order. He can accomplish something positive as regards his own redemption and the redemption of the natural order precisely because he *can* examine his actions and motives and because he can *redirect* his energies as he sees appropriate. He is conscious of his *self* (or selfhood), and he is able to modify his behaviour *because* endowed with consciousness. Furthermore – a point that has absolutely central importance for Solovyov's religious philosophy – not only is man able to reflect upon his actions as an *individual*, but he can examine the activities and aspirations of *collective* humanity in the course of history. He can judge whether or not the direction taken by mankind as a whole is desirable and beneficial.

Solovyov emphasised that to bring about the full reanimation and transfiguration of the created, natural order man has to retain *faith* in the ultimate victory of the Good. In other words, man needs to believe that good, desirable ends *may* be achieved by good, morally acceptable means, and that the way of love proclaimed by Christ is, finally, the most efficacious means available to us. (The solution sought by the Grand Inquisitor in *Brothers Karamazov* is essentially unacceptable because the Inquisitor renounces love as a means to achieve his goal of happiness for the mass of mankind and because – by assuming at the very outset that they are unable to bear responsibility and freedom – he thinks of and treats them as a herd. He thus deprives them of dignity, and denies them the possibility of attaining the true ideal of *community* promised in the Christian Gospels).

As is affirmed by Lossky's observations above, the transfiguration of humanity and all created being could only come in the wake of God's self-revelation to man. The Apostles on Mount Tabor were granted a most privileged and rare vision which induced them to see and recognise the authority of Christ. It was an awesome experience that subsequently awakened their faith in the eventual spiritualisation and transfiguration of all creation, in *universal* salvation.

In Chapter 4 I mentioned that Solovyov personally experienced

three visions which conveyed to him an immediate sense or foretaste of the universal harmony that awaits the created world. It is plain from his life and writings that he valued these visions greatly. The visions appear to have helped sustain his faith in the *eventual* triumph of the Good, the triumph which is conveyed by the image of the 'sun of love' (*solntse lyubvi*) in his lyrical poetry. In a poem of 1887 he affirms his faith in this way:

> Death and Time rule on earth;
> Do not call them lords.
> Everything, swirling about, disappears in the gloom,
> Only the sun of love remains steady.[37]

Solovyov, philosopher and poet, recognised that he had apprehended something that was not disclosed to most men. In most people's experience matter acts as a barrier or veil, *concealing* the truest type of beauty and harmony behind it. On the basis of direct personal experience, Solovyov was able to affirm, in his autobiographical poem *Three Meetings*:

> Beneath the coarse surface of material being
> I managed to touch the eternal purple hue,
> And I came to know the radiance of divinity.[38]

Solovyov stressed that it is the *prophet* who is especially able to perceive and appreciate the desirable state of harmony and order that mankind and nature are destined to attain. The Prophet is granted this vision of future harmony on account of his moral preparation and accomplishments[39] and of his firm faith in the triumph of the Good. The significance of the Prophet as a 'spiritual type' is considered under the heading *Theocracy*, for he is one of three representatives of authority in Solovyov's conception of theocratic government. Here it is his capacity for constant faith in the Good that is noteworthy, the faith which all Christians need to cultivate in themselves, so that they may, in time, recognise and acknowledge the *spiritual* aspect that inheres in all created matter.

ALL-UNITY (PAN-UNITY) – VSEEDINSTVO

Vladimir Solovyov's various statements on All-Unity contain some

of his most central beliefs and teachings regarding the nature of God. The concept of All-Unity helped him in two particular respects: firstly, he employed this term to clarify and correct what he regarded as unfortunately imbalanced views of the nature of God (views which exclusively affirmed either the transcendence or immanence of God); secondly, this term served him in the formulation of arguments affirming the Trinitarian view of God. Solovyov was anxious to counter the view that the Divinity (or Divine Principle, *bozhestvennoe nachalo*) is characterised purely by an *absence* of defining qualities. At the beginning of his fourth lecture on Godmanhood[40] he points out that the term Absolute (Lat. *absolutum*) signifies two things:

(a) that in respect of which all *particular* definitions are denied;

(b) that which is *complete* (*zakonchennoe, sovershennoe*) – i.e. that which possesses all, that which contains all within itself.[41]

Solovyov argued that it is misguided to characterise the Divinity only in terms of an *absence* of defining qualities or of 'freedom from' definitions. He believed that Buddhism adopted this unsatisfactory conception of the Absolute,[42] that it stressed the inapplicability of particular definitions to the Absolute while *failing* to affirm that the Absolute *contains* all within Itself (and is 'free' of particular definitions precisely *because* It embraces them all).

Having distinguished clearly between the purely negative conception of the Absolute (*otritsatel'noe nichto*) and the positive conception (*polozhitel'noe nichto*), and having stressed that these two are by no means synonymous or interchangeable, Solovyov went on to show that when he referred to the *positive* content of the Divine Principle, this could not rightly be taken as 'purely an aggregate of natural phenomena' (*Ono ne mozhet byt' tol'ko sovokupnost'yu prirodnykh yavleniy*).[43] Natural phenomena, taken either singly or collectively, cannot be characterised by full, authentic and constant existence, and therefore they cannot represent or be the 'positive content' of the Divine Principle.[44] These phenomena are still subject to *change*, they do not possess stable, lasting qualities and therefore they cannot themselves serve as the full, positive content of the Divine Principle.

Mention has already been made of the reasons underlying Solovyov's critique of the Deist and Pantheist conceptions of the

Divine (Chapter 4). He criticised them on account of their *exclusive* affirmation of the transcendent nature of the Divine and immanent nature respectively.[45] He called for a due recognition of *both* these natures in the Divine, and sought to clarify the seeming contradiction involved in admission of these 'incompatible' qualities by distinguishing God as He is in Himself and God as He is in relation to the world:

> God, being *in Himself* transcendent (existing beyond the confines of the world), at the same time, *in relation to* the world *appears* as an active creative force. . .[46] (Solovyov's italics)

This resolution of the problem not only avoids the one-sidedness of the Deists' and the Pantheists' respective claims; it also allows Solovyov to develop an interpretation of traditional Christian teaching that relies greatly upon *transfiguration* and *spiritualisation*. His views, as developed in *Lectures on Godmanhood*, highlight the way that the Divine action on the created world is transformative.[47] At the same time, these views are Christocentric.

Solovyov criticised some of the mediaeval theologians of Western Europe who had provided extremely legalistic interpretations (based on expiation and atonement) to account for the Incarnation of God.[48] This emphasis was, in his view, alien to Orthodox Christians and it derived from Roman conceptions of law. Solovyov considered it vitally important to stress that the Incarnation was an *essential* part of the divinely-ordained plan for the universe:

> With that conception of Divinity and of humanity which is given in these lectures, the Incarnation of the Divinity is not only possible, but in an essential way enters the general plan of the universe.[49]

> In truth, the work of Christ is not a juridicial fiction. . . it is a real feat, a real struggle and victory over the principle of evil. The Second Adam was born on earth not for the fulfilment of a formal juridicial process, but for the real salvation of mankind, for its effective rescue from the power of the force of evil, for the actual revelation within it of the Kingdom of God.[50]

For Solovyov the cosmic and the historical processes are intimately fused because God, in the Person of Christ, *enters* the

historical process. It is through Christ that the right relations between God and 'fallen' humanity can be re-established.[51]

Solovyov's writings on the subject of All-Unity (where he refers to the idea that the Divine Principle contains *all* within It) are especially noteworthy because they convey how finite man *strives towards* that All-one, complete Being.

Self-aware, conscious man feels himself to be in a state of *privation*, and he cannot, by his very nature, accept that state. One of Solovyov's most celebrated statements, taken from the second lecture on Godmanhood, is the following: the human personality 'does not want to and cannot be satisfied with any conditional, limited content. . .'.[52] Solovyov stresses that the true religious faith of the Christian entails acceptance of the notion that man *can* overcome his finite condition, that he can attain 'plenitude of being' (*polnota bytiya*). Acceptance of that notion is, in effect, a belief in God and in the positive, spiritual nature of humanity itself:

> . . .Thus, here faith in oneself, faith in the human personality, is at the same time faith in God, for divinity belongs to man and to God, with this difference, that it belongs to God in eternal reality, but is only being attained by man, is only being received; in [man's] present condition [the state of divinity] is only a possibility, only an aspiration (*stremlenie*).[53]

It will be seen from this and numerous other passages in his works how important and valuable man's spiritual *aspiration* was to Solovyov. Since he believed so strongly that man must participate actively in the task of universal salvation, he regarded man's aspiration to attain that Christian goal as his guiding force. The complete spiritual fulfilment of humanity was the subject of Solovyov's third and final mystical vision, a vision in which harmony prevailed and past, present and future times were reconciled.[54] While Solovyov remained ever conscious of the transcendence of God, [55] he sensed the *immanence* of God in His creation through direct and intense personal experience. Some of his poems testify to the nature of this experience:

> . . . But the eternal, which has revealed itself this night
> Is not destroyed by time . . .

Yes! God is with us –
Not beyond the confines of countless worlds . . .
And not in the sleeping memory of centuries.

He is *here, now* – among the arbitrary rush,
In the turbid stream of life's cares
You grasp the all-joyous mystery:
Evil is powerless; we are eternal; God is with us![56]

Solovyov employed the term *All-Unity* not only to correct one-sided, defective notions of the nature of God, but also in order to establish the validity of Christian teaching on the Holy Trinity. In an extensive and elaborate argument which fills the sixth and seventh lectures on Godmanhood,[57] Solovyov undertook to show that the Church's teaching on the mystery of the Trinity itself *expresses* the notion of God's all-comprehensive, all-unifying nature. In the sixth lecture (summarised at the beginning of the following lecture), he presents reasons for taking the Divinity as three indivisible Persons sharing one Essence. Each of these Persons perceives (apprehends) that absolute essence in Its own manner. Using the analogy of the three fundamental faculties of man, namely the faculties of *willing*, *knowing* and *sensing*,[58] Solovyov taught that the three Persons of the Holy Trinity will, know and sense one and the same absolute content.[59]

For Solovyov the triad *Good–Truth–Beauty* bore great importance, and he believed that the Good, the True and the Beautiful are the fundamental categories under which the three Persons of the Trinity apprehend their absolute content. It is one and the same absolute content which is apprehended respectively as Good, as True, and as Beautiful.[60]

In schematic form (which also provides the basis for other triads belonging to Solovyov's religious philosophical system), he presents his findings thus:

When apprehended primarily by the Will, the idea is called the Good;
When apprehended by the faculty of Knowing [by representation, *Vorstellung, predstavlenie*], the idea is called the True;
When apprehended by Feeling [*chuvstvo*], it is called Beauty.[61]

Further than this, Solovyov asserts that Good, Truth and Beauty

are different aspects of *unity*.[62] The coherence and underlying unity of the created order are prominent themes for discussion in Solovyov's work *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge (Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniya)*:[63] through the construction of various triads, the philosopher assigns Good, Truth and Beauty to particular faculties of man and to particular spheres of human activity. The terms especially associated with Solovyov's religious philosophy are *free theurgy, free theosophy* and *free theocracy*[64] *(svobodnaya teurgiya, svobodnaya teosofiya, svobodnaya teokratiya)*. Solovyov envisaged a complete and ideal organisation of men's creativity, knowledge and society, and he defined general morality (objective, not simply the subjective morality for the individual) as a conscious and free service for the enhancement of this general goal.[65] He not only wished to arrive at a coherent and acceptable philosophical or theological definition of the all-comprehensive, all-unifying nature of God, appropriate to scholarly discourse, but also worked for *practical* goals.[66] He felt that Christian believers are morally obliged to work in active ways for reconciliation among men, for justice and the betterment of society. The reaffirmation of the worth and importance of this practical moral code is to be found in Solovyov's *Justification of the Good*, written twenty years after *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*.

THE DIVINE PURPOSE – BOZHESTVENNIY ZAMYSEL

Solovyov believed that the study of history is decisive for the Jew and the Christian, because it is precisely *within* the course of historical development that their respective Traditions enable them to discern God's purpose in creating the world. Solovyov refuted the view that history comprises a flow of random, meaningless events that have no direction or ultimate goal. For him the cosmic process itself is intimately connected with the historical process: if it is possible to say that the cosmic process involves a fundamental transition from primordial chaos to a state of increasing harmony and order,[67] then it is in the unfolding of historical events and in the advance of conscious, self-aware humanity that the revelation of meaning and of an underlying *Divine purpose* become most apparent. On the purely *natural*, physical level of existence man experiences the meaningless tyranny of time and of passing generations, the 'evil infinity' *(das schlechte Unendlichkeit)*.[68] One

generation inevitably has to yield its place to the following one and has to vanish into death and the past; it cannot prolong its hold on the present time, nor retain and fully enjoy the fruit of its achievements. The succeeding generation will, in its turn, have to give way to the next generation because still subject to the conditions of time, physical destruction and death. If man were really confined to such an existence, it could truly be said that his life lacked meaning. However, according to Solovyov's account, man's involvement in *historical* development – and his capacity to reflect upon the nature of that development – allow him to detect meaning, order and direction in the events unfolding before him. Solovyov sought to show that, for the Jew and the Christian in particular, the very passage of time may be regarded and interpreted *sub specie aeternitatis*.

This idea is taken up and treated by Nikolai Berdyaev in his book *The Meaning of History* (*Smysl istorii*). In Berdyaev's view, Christianity demonstrates that eternity 'can break the chain of time'.[69] For the purposes of contrast, Berdyaev cites Hinduism and other Oriental Traditions as instances of the a-historical viewpoint, that is, of the viewpoint which is not affected by historical considerations because so wholly focused upon 'the metaphysical'. (See the second chapter of his book: 'On the Nature of the Historical: the Metaphysical and the Historical').[70] The important point to observe, here, is that the Christian historically-based viewpoint provides a conception of the relations between God and man as a *dynamic drama* involving human freedom.[71] It was this question of human freedom and the question whether or not the world process provides sufficiently for that freedom which so deeply concerned Friedrich Schelling and, in their turn, Solovyov and Berdyaev. Berdyaev certainly stresses the dynamic and dramatic aspects of the historical process. A contemporary theologian, Rowan Williams, has written lucidly of the history of Jesus as 'an irruption of grace into the historical world'. In his study of Christian spirituality *The Wound of Knowledge*, Williams sets the issues in their fuller context:

> It is one of the commonest errors to suppose that Platonism of any sort simply devalues the finite. . . . The weakness of Platonism, however, is its lack of *historical* concern: its world is essentially static. Origen succeeds in giving history, story, a place in such a system, and does so not simply by treating the story as a long

> cipher, as allegory, but by granting that – at least – the history of Jesus is an irruption of grace into the historical world, an historical picture of the eternal Godhead.[72]

Vladimir Solovyov briefly summarises his views regarding the direction and purpose of world history in his book *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*:

> The appearance of the new spiritual man in Christ is the focal point (*sredotochie*) of universal history. The end or goal of this history consists in the appearance of spiritual humanity. The ancient world gravitated towards the spiritual man, the new world gravitates towards spiritual humanity, that is, so that Christ *should realize His image in all [beings]* – (chtoby Khristos *voobrazilsya vo vsekh*).[73] (Solovyov's italics)

Solovyov not only defines the goal of universal history as the transition (or evolution) from the individual spiritual man to collective 'spiritual humanity', but also states specifically what path is needed to attain that goal, that *summum bonum*:

> This goal is attained by a twofold path: by the path of personal moral perfectibility and by the path of improvement of social relations.[74]

When Solovyov directs his attention to central issues of theology and historical interpretation, he at no stage loses sight of the importance of the individual and collective humanity.[75] His practical schemes for the inauguration of a theocratic government, and his writings on the principles of theocracy, were intended to establish the authentic Christian model of culture. He was particularly inspired by the belief that all humanity represents one living *organism*, and that this integral, 'organic' aspect of humanity is affirmed by the traditional mystical symbolism of Christianity, in which the Church, that is, the collected community of believers, is called 'the Bride of Christ' (*nevesta Khristova*) or 'the mystical Body of Christ'. As Solovyov explains, Christian government includes elements seen in the pre-Christian, pagan forms of government of both East and West; it contains these elements, but also provides a *new* and vital element which assures the welfare of mankind:

> In Christian government is found all that was also in pagan government, both Eastern and Western, but all this acquires a new significance, it is renewed in the spirit of truth (*obnovlyaetsya v dukhe istiny*). There is domination (*gospodstvo*) in Christian government, but domination not in the name of its own strength, but in the name of the general good and in agreement with the directives of the Church authority. There is also submission in Christian government, though not from slavish fear, but according to conscience and voluntarily, for the sake of that general welfare which the sovereign and subjects serve in like manner.[76]

In *Judaism and the Christian Question* Solovyov explains how the ideal of Christian rule incorporates Hellenic, Roman and Eastern conceptions of rule as well as introducing the specifically Christian idea that the ruler is a servant and guardian of the truth.[77] He indicates that humanity's ideas on the rule and organisation of society evolve in the course of history, and that this is, finally, in accordance with the promises of Christ in the Gospels that all humanity can be, and is destined to be, 'redeemed'.

GODMANHOOD – BOGOCHELOVECHESTVO

> From the first ages of Christianity right until the present time, God-man has appeared for the world as a stumbling-block and a snare. Above all, [it is] deeply religious people [who] hit themselves on this stumbling-block, [people] who could not free themselves of the old religious idea which did not fathom the actual and complete union of the Divinity with our nature.[78]

In Solovyov's view, the Islamic and Zoroastrian religions are instances of 'the old religious idea', religions that adhere to a too rigid separation of God and created nature. Solovyov took the Christian faith to be a more complete revelation of God's nature than Islām and Zoroastrianism, because it prompted man to discern God's *immanence* in His creation as well as His transcendence. Eventually Solovyov came to arrange the various religious Traditions of the world in a hierarchy, describing some religious philosophies as 'partial' revelations of the nature of God and

naming the Christian view as the most 'complete' revelation of God's nature. The critical difference which set apart the Christian faith from other faiths was the affirmation, central to Christianity, that God Himself assumed human nature, became incarnate, so as to effect the redemption of created and imperfect nature. The belief that Jesus Christ embodied divine and human nature, and that He entered the course of human history, and thus 'sanctified' it (making the spiritualisation of humanity a real possibility) – here is the burden of Solovyov's teaching on *Godmanhood*. Solovyov's religious–philosophical system was Christocentric, and it assigned prime importance to the *universal* nature of the salvation proclaimed in the Gospels.

In his *Lectures on Godmanhood* Solovyov underlines the point that the Incarnation of God, His appearance among men on earth, has in various ways been *prepared*:[79] the Jews' apprehension of God as a Personal Being, their expectation of a Messiah, their view of themselves as God's chosen people with a special religious and historical destiny – all these developments prepared the way for the birth of Christ among the Jewish nation.[80] The threads of continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament are, of course, very numerous, and this continuity is explicitly confirmed by Christ in His words: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfil them' (Matt. 5, 17). For Solovyov, as is evident particularly in his writings on theocracy, the Old Testament was a profoundly rich source of insights regarding the nature of God and Divine-human relations. He recognised the sense in which Christ came to 'fulfil' the Law of the Jews, but he also perceived the essential differences between the Old and New Testaments. In this respect he followed the spirit and tradition of Christian Biblical exegesis. The distinctive feature of Solovyov's interpretation – and of his teaching on Godmanhood in particular – was the manner in which he drew attention to the unique status of Jesus Christ and especially to His central position in the *world process* itself.[81] In the second place, Solovyov stressed collective humanity's potential state of harmony and unity (an organic unity), the attainment of which was promised in Christ's statements about the eventual triumph of His Church.[82] He also stressed Christ's immediate involvement in the human historical process, the need for Christ's appearance at a middle point in history.

In the seventh lecture on Godmanhood, Solovyov is concerned to

show that, although Christianity shares certain elements with other religions and philosophies (asceticism, idealism, and belief in one God), it is actually Christ's teaching about His own Person that distinguishes this from other religions.[83]

A specially striking feature of Christ's teaching is that He *avoided* self-assertion as a basis for action and made a very radical departure from secular morality and attitudes by His consistent advocacy of *self-denial.*[84] The fundamental contrast between Christ's teachings and the characteristically 'secular' view is brought out in the New Testament through the contrast of 'the Kingdom of Caesar' and 'the Kingdom of God'. Christ's celebrated answer to the Pharisees – 'Render unto God the things that are God's, and render unto Caesar those that are Caesar's'[85] – underlines the distinction between Christian and secular values. References to 'the kingdom of Caesar' are frequent in the Gospels, and Solovyov employed the image of Caesar's kingdom to denote the 'secular' or non-Christian morality and viewpoint. Such references to the Roman Caesars have a particular significance for Solovyov's explanations of *Godmanhood.* To clarify the idea of Godmanhood itself and to show that Christ advocated self-denial as the means to attain sanctity, he contrasted that way of self-denial with the self-assertion and self-divinization (*samoobozhestvlenie*) of the Roman Caesars. They glorified the self-assertive, powerful man and attributed divine status to him, but this was, in Solovyov's view, the creation of a *man-god,* not of the desired *God-man.* All that the wilful, self-assertive man does is to provide an inversion and hollow mockery of the Christian ideal of Godmanhood. It was this type of inversion and mockery and the deliberate displacement of Godman which Dostoevsky exposed so effectively in his works. Dostoevsky and Solovyov coincide completely in their recognition of Godmanhood and its full spiritual significance for man.[86]

SPIRITUALISATION – ODUKHOTVORENIE

Spiritualisation represents a central element in Vladimir Solovyov's religious philosophy, and he employs that term in a distinctive way.

As will be clear from the foregoing observations on *transfiguration* (*preobrazovanie*), Solovyov takes the unique event of God's Incarnation, His actual entry into the course of human history and

His assumption of human nature as the point after which men may fully recognise that they bear 'the image of God' within them.

In his discussion of spiritualisation Solovyov focuses upon the *evolution* of the whole created order, and in this he anticipates the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin by several decades. Solovyov taught that the entire order of material being evolves and that it goes through a number of important transitional stages as it tends towards the final point, the spiritual state of being. The critical stages in this evolutionary process are as follows:

(a) the advance from inorganic to organic forms of life;
(b) the emergence of plant life;
(c) the emergence of animal life;
(d) the appearance of *conscious, reflective man;*
(e) the appearance of God-man, the spiritual being first and most completely exemplified by Jesus Christ.[87]

Solovyov did *not* accept the widely-held view that the fact of evolutionary growth negates the validity and the content of religious belief. Indeed, he was consistent in arguing that the very fact that evolution occurs *supports* belief in the spiritual. The process of evolution itself allows for the attainment of a spiritual state, and the fact that men are endowed with self-awareness (*samosoznatel'nost'*) makes advancement to a higher evolutionary stage virtually certain, according to Solovyov and, later, Teilhard de Chardin. (Termination of the whole evolutionary process at the very point where creaturely beings finally become self-aware actually seems more improbable than advancement to a higher state.) What Solovyov is particularly concerned to establish, when he cites the evidence of evolutionary growth in his arguments, is that the emergence of spiritual beings and of a spiritual reality is wholly *consistent* with the direction and advancement of the world process. Solovyov affirmed that the spiritual dimension of reality is *not* simply an epiphenomenon of an otherwise mechanistic universe. The transition to a state of 'spiritual humanity' (which becomes possible after the Incarnation) is, on Solovyov's account, the most fitting culminating point of the world process, with the Incarnation as the central 'event':

> The Incarnation of the Divinity is not something miraculous in the proper sense, i.e. not something *alien* to the general order of

being, but on the contrary, is essentially connected with all the history of the world and of humanity, is something prepared and logically following from this history.[88]

SELF-ASSERTION – SAMOUTVERZHDENIE

In Vladimir Solovyov's religious philosophy *self-assertion* is discussed on two distinct, but related, levels:

(a) in the context of *the entire created order*, which strives and needs – for the sake of its freedom – to assert itself as distinct from the Divine Absolute;
(b) in the context of *the individual being*, whose self-assertive will and actions diminish the well-being of others and promote mutual conflict.

Solovyov was aware of the theological and philosophical problems entailed in attempting to reconcile the notions of the fulfilment of the divinely-ordained plan for the salvation of the created order and, on the other hand, human freedom. Here the Russian philosopher was greatly indebted to the writings of Friedrich Schelling on precisely this theme. He was as concerned as Schelling that men's freedom should be an authentic freedom, that men's scope for action should not be determined by subordination to divinely-ordained goals.[89] Hence, both Schelling and Solovyov argue that it is not desirable for God immediately to render His creation *perfect*. If men are deprived of the occasion to be any other than perfect, then God's creative action is, in effect, simply an *imposition* of an ideal condition.[90] However, God's creative action would take on a positive significance if the development or 'unfolding' of His plan allowed for men to be, at some point, *other* than perfect. On the basis of this line of argument, Schelling and, in his turn, Solovyov presented the full world process as being a development in three stages:

(i) a stage of complete *undifferentiated unity*;
(ii) a stage at which the created order freely *asserts* itself as distinct from, and 'other than', the Divine Absolute, the source of its being;

(iii) the striving and voluntary *return* of the created order to unity with the Divine Absolute.

This scheme was applied by both Schelling and Solovyov to central Christian teaching. In his book *Reason and Existence: Schelling's Philosophy of History* (1967), Paul Hayner writes:

> What is referred to as the Fall in the Christian tradition becomes, in Schelling's view, the beginning of the Absolute's self-limitation, the place where freedom as spontaneous choice creates the possibility of the antithesis between 'good' and 'evil' through an activity which, potentially at least, runs counter to the direction established by the Absolute Will.[91]
>
> Human history, in the sense of a true sequence of events whose immediate occasion is the autonomy of man, does not begin until after the Fall.[92]

It may be seen how very closely indeed these descriptions of Schelling's outlook correspond to the account of the world process formulated by Solovyov. Both philosophers regarded a deterministic model of the universal and historical process as unacceptable because inconsistent with the fact of individual and collective man's striving for self-expression in a variety of activities. In the third chapter of his *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* Solovyov affirms that the Christian path to spiritual attainment consists of two elements: 'the path of personal moral perfectibility and the path of improvement of social relations'.[93] The second of these is provided for by the true theocratic organisation of society, and the first has meaning and value, holds Solovyov, only if man is given full and authentic freedom. Man also needs to be induced to respect the freedom of others, to recognise fully the detrimental effects of self-assertion (the assertion of personal will) and to see and accept the efficacy and rightness of Christ's teaching of *self-denial*.[94]

THE WORLD-SOUL – MIROVAYA DUSHA

In Solovyov's brief description of the term ' the World-Soul' in the *Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopaedia* we find the following explanation:

> Many philosophical teachings, having deduced the unity of the

> world from the eternal sphere of ideal or intelligible being, also, however, admitted a living world-soul in all phenomena, as a subordinate principle receiving and realizing in the sphere of the senses (*v chuvstvennoy oblasti*) and in the process of time that higher ideal unity, eternally present in the absolute principle.[95]

In the seventh lecture on Godmanhood Solovyov relates this notion of two kinds of unity to arguments regarding the position and status of Christ in the universal or world process. The two kinds of unity are precisely defined, in the lecture, as the active unity which overcomes multiplicity and, secondly, that unity which is passive or 'produced', which is multiplicity brought to a state of unity.[96] The active or 'producing' unity is called such in the lecture (*proizvodyashchee edinstvo*), and the passive unity is designated as 'produced unity' (*proizvedënnoe edinstvo*). On Solovyov's account, the active power which causes the multiple phenomena of the created order to attain unity is plainly conceived of as divine.

It is noteworthy that Solovyov expressly criticised theories of the World-Soul such as Schopenhauer's. He did not consider Schopenhauer's notion of the World-Soul as a blind, impersonal Will subject to no higher power either consistent or tenable.[97]

Solovyov's own views on the World-Soul were in turn submitted to criticism. Some Christians responded warily to his writings on this subject, and his tendency to mention the World-Soul as a personalised, feminine figure named Sophia (the subject of Cabbalistic and other mystical literature) proved conducive to various misunderstandings among his readers. Possibly the most serious matter to disturb less mystically inclined Christians than himself was the fear that Solovyov appeared to be elevating this 'personalised' World-Soul Sophia to a position of spiritual importance unfortunately close to that of the Three Persons of the Trinity. It was thought that he advocated veneration of Sophia as the Fourth Hypostasis. Other charges (which he refuted in the Introduction to the third edition of his poems, 1900) included the belief that he had established a carnal or earthly ideal through his veneration of the feminine figure 'Sophia', that is, that he venerated an 'earthly Aphrodite' (*Aphrodita mirskaya*).

Schelling and Solovyov both held that the entire created order must be permitted to assert itself as *distinct* from the Absolute and then to return freely to the Absolute.[98] This act of self-assertion is critically important for conscious man, and it is this which ensures that he is properly free. If man were obliged to accept a perfect

world order established by God at the beginning of his history, then according to Schelling and Solovyov, in that event, man would be deprived of freedom. *Only the provision of a real choice between perfection and imperfection makes man's acceptance of perfection valuable.*

Man and nature are permitted to 'fall' from perfection so that conscious and effectively *free* man may experience privation and then elect to return to the Absolute. (See also the sections on *self-assertion* and *the Divine purpose*).

Creaturely existence is particularly painful and unsatisfying for conscious man: he is aware that discord and mutual hostilities, the conflict of interests and (at the individual level) the conflict of self-assertive wills are in themselves undesirable, and he senses that, confined to these conditions, he is diminished in stature. This is counter to his real nature; as Solovyov asserted in the second lecture on Godmanhood, the human personality 'does not want to and cannot be satisfied with any conditional, limited content'.[99] Further, Solovyov taught that man aspires to attain 'plentitude of being' (*polnota bytiya*), and that, if he is sufficiently willing and receptive to become the channel for Divine grace, the whole created, material order may be 'sanctified'. The evil spirit of discord and hostility (*zloy dukh razlada i vrazhdy*)[100] may be overcome on account of Christ's Incarnation and redemptive self-sacrifice and of man's free participation in the divinely-ordained plan.

Solovyov stressed that the Church founded by Christ plays a most important part in *unifying* men and in articulating their spiritual aspirations, their wish to see the Kingdom of God realized on earth. According to Solovyov's teaching the Church is the most suitable instrument through which to attain the 'true life':

> The Church is the universal organisation of true life.[101]
>
> True life must be realized in *spiritual* humanity, that is, in the Church. The life of the Church is [situated] between Divine [life] and natural life.[102]
>
> The ideal of *the community of all within the Church,** universal brotherhood, the perfect Kingdom of grace and truth, love and freedom – this is *the future of the Church.*[103] (Solovyov's italics)

*Here Solovyov provides the term *vsetserkovnost'*, which is very close in meaning to *sobornost'* but cannot be adequately translated by one word in English.

At the end of the passage from which the second and third of these excerpts are taken (his Introduction to *The History and Future of Theocracy*, 1885–87) Solovyov explicitly equates this future Church, this ideal community of believing Christians, with *Sophia, Divine Wisdom* (Sophia, *Premudrost' Bozhiya*),[104] the true companion of God (*istinnaya podruga Bozhiya*). Through and in the Church, then, holds Solovyov, individual Christians can become *one body*, and the multiplicity of the created order can be brought back to unity, unity which, in the Absolute, has remained constant and eternal.

THEOCRACY – TEOKRATIYA

According to the definition given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, theocracy is

> a term applied to a form of government or to a state ruled by such a form of government, in which God or the divine power is looked to as the source of all civil power, and the divine commandments regarded as the laws of the community.[105]

The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* provides this definition:

> Any tribe or state that claims to be governed by a god or gods may be called a *theocracy*. History has many different types, e.g. the theocratic idea underlies Brahmanism, Islām, the papacy, and the theory of 'kingship by divine right'. Yet there is probably no historical instance of a 'pure' theocracy . . . The idea of government by God was the dominant one in Israelite polity. It is the leading instance of theocracy for all times.[106]

Vladimir Solovyov conceived of theocracy as the truest possible embodiment of the Christian ideal of community. He saw many merits in the Jewish understanding and application of theocratic rule, and for his own scheme he relied heavily upon the Judaic model, but judged that the fullest, most consistent adherence to theocratic principles is to be found specifically in the Christian Tradition.[107] According to Solovyov, Judaism and Christianity accept one and the same *goal* – a universal theocracy – but Christianity also provides the *path* to the attainment of that goal.

Theocratic rule is to be valued because it provides for the spiritual needs of members of the community as well as for the material needs which secular rulers undertake to provide. Furthermore, when the state is ruled on *authentic* theocratic lines, men's spiritual needs are accorded prime importance and their fulfilment is not, as a rule, sacrificed for the sake of more utilitarian, secular considerations. In the community where spiritual matters are recognised as centrally important, the priests charged with responsibility for those matters become invested with a high degree of authority. Such authority may not necessarily be sanctioned by the laws of the state, but, in any event, the relationship between the leaders of the priestly order and the temporal ruler must be determined according to a clear set of criteria acceptable to the community at large. The presence of a figure in the state who derives his authority from a source *other* than the temporal ruler can naturally give rise to disputes and rivalry. It is therefore especially necessary that the mutual relationship between the representatives of spiritual authority and of temporal authority be seen to rest upon principles laid down in accepted Scripture. All these considerations regarding the nature of theocracy are explored by Ananda Coomaraswamy in his monograph on theocratic rule entitled *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government (1942).*[108]

In the theocratic scheme formulated by Solovyov there are three representatives of authority: the High Priest (*pervosvyashchennik*), the King (*tsar'*) and the Prophet (*prorok*). Each of these three figures has particular responsibilities towards the community (as will be specified below), and each in his way, guides the community towards a consistent enactment or realization of God's will.

At numerous points in his writings Solovyov reiterates his firm conviction that spiritual salvation is *not* simply a quest for isolated individuals to pursue. The *summum bonum* that particular individuals seek to attain must, by its very nature, be the *summum bonum* for all mankind. Solovyov perceived that collective, universal salvation is the desired goal, the goal which the theocratic organisation of society can serve. In his *The History and Future of Theocracy* he writes:

> . . . But we know that the essential goal of theocracy consists not in that *some* people are given up to God, but in that *all* are united with God.[109] (My italics)

In *Judaism and the Christian Question* Solovyov describes the desired goal as being the point when 'God is all in all, when each human being is a receptacle of divinity'.[110]

The three theocratic figures of authority provide the community with different kinds of guidance, according to Solovyov's scheme. This is brought out by his deliberate use of three etymologically related words in Russian, conveying both the distinction and the closeness between the functions of the High Priest, the King and the Prophet. He asserts that the High Priest directs (*na*pravlyaet) the community, the King governs (*u*pravlyaet) it, and the Prophet corrects (*is*pravlyaet) it.[111] Solovyov provides further schematic division in order to indicate the basis of their authority:

> The High Priest has *authority* based on *tradition* (representing *past* time);
> the King has *power* founded upon the *law* (representative of *present* time);
> the Prophet has the *freedom* of *personal initiative** (representative of *future* time).[112]

If the theocratic representatives of God exercise their delegated authority in a genuinely Christian spirit and manner, then, in Solovyov's view, the spiritual welfare and development of the community is assured. Moreover, he proposed, the activities of the High Priest, the King and the Prophet counter the negative effects of the continuous passing and succession of generations to which men are subject in their natural life.[113] Each generation is prevented from consolidating its achievements and from preserving what is valuable because it must necessarily yield its place to the next, growing generation. This, writes Solovyov, causes dissatisfaction to each generation in turn, and this natural, but undesirable succession of generations he calls the 'evil infinity', (*durnaya beskonechnost'* or the equivalent German term *'das schlechte Unendlichkeit'*).[114] Thus, natural life cannot offer man fulfilment. But, according to Solovyov, the theocratic arrangement of society redeems man from the unsatisfactory conditions of natural existence; it specifically enables man to retain what is valuable from his past, and to employ that for his own development in the present

**Personal initiative*: In his system Solovyov actually regards the theocratic Prophet as speaking with the authority of *personal conscience*, so I will refer to 'personal conscience' below, rather than to the less specific term 'personal initiative'.

and the future. As indicated above, each of the theocratic figures bears a special responsibility for one period of time, past, present or future; the harmonious cooperation of these three figures renders possible a victory by men over the natural succession of generations, the 'evil infinity'. In other words, Solovyov proposed that if the proper relations between these three figures are maintained, then the attainment of society's ideal of the future need not negate the value residing in its life and institutions of the past and present.

Although the High Priest, the King and the Prophet derive their authority and special status partly from tradition, law and personal conscience respectively (see above), Solovyov views their ultimate authority as deriving directly from Christ Himself.

Here Solovyov departs from the schematic kind of definitions he has employed elsewhere, and bases his argument on a *symbolic* interpretation. In symbolic terms that wholly accord with Biblical Scripture, Christ may be designated as High Priest, King and Prophet.[115] He embodies essential aspects of all three theocratic figures, and each of these functions reveals something of His redemptive mission on earth. Thus, this symbolic designation of Christ as High Priest, King and Prophet is the ultimate basis for Solovyov's description of the three representatives of divine authority in his theocratic scheme.

It is now necessary to enumerate the particular attributes and duties of each theocratic figure in turn.

In *The History and Future of Theocracy* Solovyov undertakes a very detailed examination of the Judaic conception of theocracy, and in Books III and IV he considers the status and the responsibilities of the High Priest, the King and the Prophet in the Jewish community during the period from the Exodus to the reign of Saul. In attempting to define the responsibilities of the High Priest in his own theocratic scheme, Solovyov refers extensively to the Judaic conception of priestly duties. For the Jews the High Priest was, in the first place, the member of the community who performed the Sacrifice to Yahweh, thus maintaining the communication between the whole Jewish people and their God:

> In the normal life of the people and the nation, the task of the clergy consists primarily in the making of sacrifices, maintaining the fundamental real link between the Divinity and man, expiating human sins, sanctifying the affairs [of men]. . . .[116]

As Solovyov notes, in Judaism the role of the clergy did not remain restricted to the making of sacrifices:

> As regards His own chosen people, Yahweh not only wants to be in daily contact with [them], but wants to lead [them] to higher goals. . . . Therefore, that select part of Israel which is in closest contact with Yahweh, which is dedicated to Him – the clergy – cannot limit its service just [to] the offering of sacrifices.[117]

Solovyov stresses that the role of the High Priest and the clergy was to *direct* the people:

> Over and above [performing] its own sacrificial duties, [the clergy] must be a living channel for the providential action of God, directing and leading the whole Israelite nation on its historical path.[118]

The spiritual significance of the High Priest for the entire social community is very cleary stated by Solovyov in the following lines:

> The High Priest represents that central point at which the Divinity directly makes contact with the organism of human society, [the point] through which It unites with the whole sphere of social existence, in order continually and correctly to direct the whole (*eto tseloe*) on the path to its higher purpose, indicating to it each time, at each cross-road, *where to go*.[119] (Solovyov's italics)

Solovyov observes that whereas it was the Jews who especially perceived and defined the true function and duties of the High Priest (and of the Prophet), the conception of the theocratic King was developed in Byzantium:[120]

> In the Orthodox ruler of the new Rome [Byzantium] all the pagan elements of the idea of rule were purified and transformed by Christianity.[121]

According to Solovyov, the Christian conception of temporal ruler is actually a synthesis of other conceptions and insights: the Christian conception embraces the *Oriental* idea of supreme autocrat, the *Hellenic* idea of a wise guide of the people, the *Roman*

idea of the emperor as the very embodiment of state law, and, in addition to these, the particularly *Christian* notion of the ruler as the servant of the true religion, the defender and guardian of its interests upon earth.[122]

The power of the Christian ruler must be sanctified by the High Priest, and this act of sanctification is symbolised in the anointing and crowning of the temporal ruler by the High Priest.[123] While Christianity recognises the need for the ruler to be autonomous, not subject to the dictates of his people, it also requires that he be 'a son of the Church' (*syn tserkvi*).[124] The King's submission to the High Priest in the ritual of anointing and crowning, and his continued service to the Church, do not give the Church hierarchy the right of temporal rule:

> . . . This does not give the Church hierarchy any rights of power in the sphere of government, but obliges the ruler to be a devoted son of the Church and a true servant of God's affairs; only on this condition does he have the aspect [significance] of a Christian ruler, one of the formative organs of true theocracy.[125]

Solovyov stresses that the ordering of the theocratic state must ensure the *freedom* of man to be united with God. The direction of the High Priest cannot be a matter of compulsion, and the natural, human society (for which the King bears responsibility) requires freedom of choice and action:

> But for this [free union with God] it is essential that the worldly, natural-human element has its own place in the theocracy, that it also is afforded the fullness of independent action and development.[126]

The fundamental task of the three theocratic figures (the High Priest, King and Prophet) is 'to lead people to the *divine goal* [while] not destroying their *human* freedom'.[127] The High Priest and the clergy are required to ensure progress towards the divine goal, and the King must use his temporal power in such a way as to guarantee men their freedom.[128] The calling and task of the third theocratic representative of authority, that is, the Prophet, is very special: in the Bible, and in Solovyov's own scheme, the Prophet is most truly and completely the instrument of God.[129] Solovyov asserts that 'in

actual fact, the prophetic power is presented in the Bible as the source of all the other [powers]'.[130]

In Chapter 4 it was indicated that the Prophet is regarded by Solovyov as, above all, a *man of faith* (having faith in the ultimate victory of the Good): he is guided by personal conscience, and he is entitled to assume the prophetic role only after a proper and rigorous moral preparation. If the prophetic attributes of discernment, humility and moral attainment are lacking, then a man's reliance upon personal, free conscience may be harmful. Solovyov criticised Protestantism[131] on the grounds of excessive reliance upon personal conscience as the arbiter of morality; this valuation of personal conscience by the Protestants, alleged Solovyov, excluded due recognition of the 'authority' of the Church on moral issues. It also allowed people to be guided by personal conscience alone, even in the absence of a high standard of morality or of suitable moral preparation. Solovyov judged that to accord personal conscience absolute value in this way was as undesirable on the part of individuals as it was in the Protestant movement as a whole.

The Prophet, suitably qualified by his moral preparation and attainments, and firm in the faith that the Divine plan for the development of humanity may indeed be attained, is, according to Solovyov, a *free evangelist and teacher* (*svobodniy propovednik i uchitel'*).[132] Although the status of the Prophet in a truly theocratic society is so special, the Prophet nevertheless requires the presence and cooperation of the High Priest and King. Indeed, in order completely to fulfil his own function, he requires the greatest possible development of the priestly and kingly functions.[133] In one sense the Prophet is 'the very root and also the crown of the theocratic organisation of society' (*koren' i venets teokraticheskoy organizatsii*);[134] but also, he must be considered the third of the three theocratic figures, for his purpose is to reconcile and synthesize the functions of the High Priest and the King.[135]

The *inter-dependence* of the three theocratic figures is explained and illustrated by references to Old Testament history. Solovyov explains how the High Priest cannot become directly involved in temporal rule,[136] and later gives reasons why the temporal ruler must allow himself to be guided by the High Priest and the Prophet:

> The theocratic King (ruler), receiving in all his own affairs indications of God's path through the oracle of the High Priest,

also received, through the Prophet, the revelation of the very goal of this path.[137]

The true Prophet, writes Solovyov, regards his calling not as a natural right or personal privilege, but as a special gift of God which requires him, for his part, to cultivate moral virtues. It should be said that the manner in which Solovyov treats the whole subject of the prophetic vocation (*prorocheskoe prizvanie*), the moral significance he attached to the Prophet's work (see Appendix I: 'Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov'), and his own serious and moral approach to problems, all give one grounds for surmising that he himself felt the prophetic vocation. Like the Prophet in the Judaic model of theocracy, he was himself an independent, individual figure outside the established hierarchy of the clergy, concerned with the fundamental transformation of society, having faith and looking forward to the realization of the Divine plan. It is noteworthy that some of his contemporaries (not all admirers) were more ready to attribute a prophet's character and role to him than he was ready to assume these. The following lines from a poem by Solovyov indicate clearly that he did not appreciate being regarded as a 'prophet', and that he was suspicious of people's motives for regarding him as such:

> I have been elevated among the prophets by enemies,
> They have given me this title in mockery. . . [138]

He was undoubtedly extremely conscious of the spiritual dangers and the pride involved in claiming prophetic authority for himself. However, his writings do indicate that he had, over a long period of time, devoted much thought to the nature of prophecy, the Prophet's authority in society and his concern with the transformation and spiritual growth of collective humanity.

The critical importance of the Prophet in Solovyov's theocratic society may be gauged by the following two assertions from Book IV of his *The History and Future of Theocracy*:

> Only the builders of the future give meaning and significance to the guardians of the present.[139] . . . In the person of Prophets *all* this society, *all the world* is inwardly and freely united with the Divinity.[140] (Solovyov's italics)

In view of the inter-dependent nature of their functions and authority, the exclusive self-assertion of either the High Priest, the King or the Prophet at the expense of the others constitutes 'a criminal infringement of the very essence of theocracy' (*prestupnoe pokushenie protiv samogo sushchestva teokratii*).[141] Referring again to Old Testament history to elucidate this point, Solovyov writes that Saul's self-assertion as Israel's absolute ruler, and his destruction of the official priesthood and the prophets was a plain deviation from the theocratic ideal. Having established this absolute, but unjust, rule, Saul forfeited any true claim to moral superiority, and hence he also forfeited any right to dominate the Gentiles. Deprived of the authority and support of the official priesthood and of the prophets, Saul found his own nation on the same level as other nations which relied for victory solely upon physical strength. His rejection of the theocratic ordering of society and government contributed significantly to the defeat and downfall of the Jewish people.[142]

Solovyov completed only one third of *The History and Future of Theocracy*. Here the theocratic ideal is discussed mostly in the context of Judaic theocracy. In his *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle* (1889) he considered theocracy and authority in the context of Roman Catholic ideas, and he argued in favour of recognising the Apostolic Succession and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.[143]

Solovyov's practical schemes for the reconciliation of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches and for the inauguration of a true theocracy envisaged the Tsar of Russia as the appropriate theocratic monarch. His ideas on this subject made him politically suspect in the eyes of the Tsarist government during the late 1880s, as well as a target for special censorship.[144] The philosopher's schemes were variously interpreted and criticised, but here it is not the controversies that concern us, just his fundamental ideas on theocracy.

6

JUSTIFICATION OF THE GOOD: GOAL AND PRECEPT

> Knowledge of what one ought to do presupposes a knowledge of what one is.
>
> Vladimir Solovyov

The religious philosophy offered in Vladimir Solovyov's writings is the fruit of a wide-ranging and particularly ambitious enquiry concerning human goals, creativity and values. This enquiry was undertaken by a man singularly well versed in Biblical studies, in Church history, West European philosophy, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and in the mystical literature of various religious Traditions. His vast erudition was supported by a strong conviction that his work in these major fields would yield beneficial and important results. He valued both mystical apprehension and rational thought as means of acquiring knowledge, while prophetic insight and mystical visions (when accompanied by the requisite degree of moral preparation and discipline) also found a place in his scheme. His writings testify that he regarded Christianity as the truest and most complete revelation of the nature of God and of His Will that men have received, a revelation that affirms the reality of God's intimate relationship with His creation and that fully provides for human freedom.

The present chapter provides an examination of four important features of Solovyov's religious philosophy which merit particular attention in any serious evaluation of his thought. These are as follows:

(a) his concern with 'the justification of the Good';
(b) his view of *mystical apprehension* (*misticheskoe vospriyatie*);

(c) his typological classification of religions;
(d) his arguments for a theocratic organisation of society and government.

The previous two chapters are confined to exposition of Solovyov's central teachings. The analysis presented in this chapter is intended to help determine the validity of his observations on religion and philosophy, the nature of his system, and the extent of Solovyov's success in pursuing his aims.

SOLOVYOV'S CONCERN WITH 'JUSTIFICATION OF THE GOOD'

Justification of the Good (*Opravdanie dobra*) is the title of a major work written by Solovyov in 1897, setting out his moral philosophy. My contention is that the term 'justification of the Good' may be employed to characterise his whole philosophical and theological enterprise. In his *The History and Future of Theocracy* Solovyov wrote that he sought to 'justify the faith' (*opravdat' veru*) of his forefathers;[1] his goals and method may be more readily understood if we also say of him that he regarded it as necessary to 'justify the Good'. In other words, there are two ways of describing his task of 'justification'. He hoped to show, through his writings on philosophy and religion, that there are entirely sound and unassailable reasons why man should pursue the Good above all else. The Good itself, and its justification and active defence, should serve as our goal and our precept.

Solovyov regarded it as necessary to 'justify the Good' because men, being in a state of imperfection and of impaired vision, fail to recognise the Absolute Good. Therefore they either seek *less* than the Absolute Good or they become disheartened by the apparent domination of evil over good, and they consequently lose faith in the possible realization of the Good on earth. Solovyov asserted that faith in the ultimate triumph of the Good on earth is kept alive mainly by prophets, utopian idealists and dreamers precisely because it is they who *refuse* to accept the imperfection of the created order as 'given' and inalterable.[2]

A further and critically important reason why men cannot fully discern the Good here, in our earthly existence, is that the absolute perfection of the Divine Being does not manifest itself immediately

and fully to men. To ensure that mankind has an *authentic* freedom to choose between perfection and imperfection, between good and evil, the absolute perfection of God is not fully manifest in His creation at the beginning of the world process. Perfection is to be *attained* by man, to be freely desired.[3] Here, in essence, is the teaching elaborated by Friedrich Schelling and accepted by Solovyov as a central element in his own religious views and interpretation of human history.[4]

Solovyov's conception of his principal task as 'justification of the Good' may be related to the belief in man's flawed nature, which is expressed in the Christian teaching of 'original sin'. Inability fully to recognise the Good is an inherent element of human imperfection, and in the Christian Tradition this is experienced as (and usually described in terms of) *privation*, that is, the feeling of being 'distant' from God or 'deprived' of His redemptive love. Solovyov taught that this experience of privation and especially the awareness of our own *nothingness* which tends to go with it are, together, conducive to recognition that 'God is *all*'.[5] Solovyov's concern with 'justification of the Good' belongs in the context of this central Christian premise that human nature is 'fallen' and imperfect, and that consequently men must be assisted in their recognition and acceptance of the Absolute Good.[6]

One general objection could be raised in answer to Solovyov's views on 'justification of the Good', namely this: it is precisely the Good which *requires no* 'justification'. According to that line of argument, the Good is its own justification or, in other words, the Good is self-sufficient, 'complete'; it stands in no need of qualification, rationalisation and so forth. Only that which is *in*complete, imperfect, unsound, requires qualification and rationalisation to make it more acceptable. But nothing essential can be 'added' to the Good by human efforts to 'justify' it, nor can the Good be made *more* acceptable than it already is as a result of those efforts to 'justify' it.

It is hardly possible to refute that objection. There is indeed a fundamentally important sense in which the Good cannot be 'justified' by human reason. The limited categories and terms which we generally use could not embrace the 'complete' and essential nature of the Good, nor even describe its nature. The Good, in that absolute and self-sufficient sense, eludes all particular definitions and all attempts of human reason to formulate valid, positive assertions[7] concerning it. Solovyov was quite conscious of

this 'transcendent', self-sufficient aspect of the Good,[8] and he was very familiar with the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite and others who concentrated on that theme. However, as has already been mentioned, he firmly held that because man's capacity to recognise and accept the Good is so limited, because his understanding is so imperfect, he must be assisted in every possible way to recognise the manifestations of the Absolute Good in our created world. Solovyov personally undertook to show that the primary evidence we have for accepting the Absolute Good is the extent of order and unity (as well as the striving towards unity) apparent in our world.[9] He argued (in the *Lectures on Godmanhood* and elsewhere) that the history of the world and of humanity is not simply an arbitrary sequence of meaningless, undirected events, but, on the contrary, a process indicative of a benevolent, guiding Divine Will that Itself seeks the triumph over Chaos.[10]

Solovyov employed metaphysical arguments and arguments centred on historical development to establish his religious philosophy. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 show that the central issues of moral philosophy especially engaged his attention. Ernest Radlov, editor of the philosopher's *Collected Works* and correspondence, put forward the view that Solovyov was a moral philosopher above all else:

> Anyone who tries to become aware of the life and activity of Solovyov must be struck by the following fact: Solovyov brought only one subject to a conclusion – he finished only one part of his philosophical system, namely ethics. . . . He composed his moral philosophy earliest of all and succeeded in giving only that a conclusive form. This is not chance; it is explained by the fact that Solovyov was primarily a moralist and that in this sphere he most fully displayed his individuality, and in this he invested all the depth of his mysticism.[11]

The evidence supporting Radlov's view of Solovyov as primarily a moral philosopher is very substantial. Certainly it would be appropriate to examine his statements on 'justification of the Good' in the light of Radlov's description. First, however, it can immediately be shown that Solovyov's understanding of the philosopher's aims and work supports Radlov's thesis. In Chapter II of his *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* he distinguishes between the purely theoretical philosophy of the

Schools and, on the other hand, the type of philosophy that is more than purely theory and that includes consideration of the higher aspirations of the human will and also of feeling. This latter type of philosophy (that acceptable to Solovyov himself) has moral and aesthetic significance in addition to its strictly theoretical value.[12] It is important to note that Solovyov reminds his readers of the full etymological meaning of the word '*philosophia*': maintaining the distinction between the purely abstract theoretical significance (*tol'ko otvlechënno-teoreticheskoe znachenie*) of the Schools' philosophy and the 'vital essential' significance (*zhivoe sushchestvennoe znachenie*) of the second type, Solovyov writes:

> If, for the solution of our question we turn to the etymology of the word 'philosophy', then we obtain an answer that favours the vital philosophy (*v pol'zu zhivoy filosofii*). Obviously the name 'love of wisdom' (*lyubomudrie*). . . cannot apply to abstract theoretical learning. Wisdom signifies not only completeness of knowledge, but also moral perfection, inward wholeness of the spirit (*nravstvennoe sovershenstvo, vnutrennyaya tsel'nost' dukha*).[13]

Solovyov's work *Justification of the Good*, published twenty years after *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, is consistent in affirming the *moral* aspect of the philosopher's endeavour. On the subject of his own specific aims he writes:

> To establish within the absolute moral principle the internal and full connection between true religion and sound politics – here is the main claim of this moral philosophy.[14]

In this instance he was referring specifically to his work *Justification of the Good*. In his Introduction to that work Solovyov writes that a clear conception of the very idea of the Good, and also *moral receptivity* (*nravstvennaya vospriimchivost'*), are prerequisites if the idea of good in the form of duty[15] is to be a sufficient motivating force in the individual:

> For the idea of good in the form of duty to acquire the force of a sufficient basis or motive, the combination of two factors is necessary: a sufficient clarity and fullness of this very idea in the

consciousness, and sufficient moral receptivity in the nature of the subject.[16]

The foregoing passages are intended to establish Solovyov's concern with man as a 'moral being'. That concern of his plays a critical part in his attempt to 'justify the Good', for that attempt would be deprived of all sense and value if man could not be shown to be a 'moral being' receptive to the idea of the Good. Solovyov did actually adhere to the view of man presented in the New Testament, the view which emphasises man's *likeness* to God, his capacity and desire to receive God's love, to be drawn to God. He saw man as 'fallen', in accordance with Biblical teaching, but as a being that *could* strive for spiritual perfection. Also, man could, in Solovyov's view, desire this goal of perfection not for himself alone, as an individual, but for *all* created beings.

In order to establish fully the status of the Good, Solovyov interpreted the relationship of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity largely on the basis of the triad Goodness–Truth–Beauty (as shown in Chapter 5). Using the analogy of the human individual as a willing, knowing and feeling entity, he wrote (in the seventh lecture on Godmanhood) that the Persons of the Trinity are willing, knowing and feeling subjects, in each of which one mode of apprehension predominates.[17] That which they will, know and feel is *the all*.[18] According to Solovyov, one may say that the Absolute Essential Being (*Absolyutno-Sushchee*) *wills* the all as Goodness, *knows* (or represents) it as Truth, and *feels* it as Beauty.[19]

Solovyov regarded this form of argument as an acceptable means of seeking to determine the nature of the relationship between the three Persons of the Trinity. In his book *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle* he acknowledges that the teaching on the Trinity is given us through *revelation*: however, he also writes (in the same passage in Book III, Chapter 1) that once the truth of God's existence is fully admitted, then the truth of the teaching on the Trinity can be *logically deduced*:

> *Nous venons de voir que cette vérité s'impose à la raison et peut être logiquement déduite dès qu'on admet que Dieu* est *dans le sens positif et complet de ce terme.*[20]

The tendency of Solovyov to seek logical confirmation of revealed teaching caused Lev Shestov to submit the entire Solovyovian

philosophy and approach to severe criticism in his lengthy essay 'Speculation and Apocalypse' (*Umozrenie i apokalipsis*) of 1927.[21] It should be said, however, that Solovyov valued Christianity precisely because it offers a positive view of the Absolute, because the Christian Tradition stresses that the Absolute is *plenitude of being* (*polnota bytiya*), wholeness, completeness (*vsetsel'nost'*). He distinguished it from those religions that, in his view, accept and describe the Absolute only in terms of '*freedom* from definition' or as 'above' all definitions, categories, limiting attributes, classifications, and so forth (see his fourth lecture on Godmanhood).[22] The Good, for Solovyov, is one of the three fundamental aspects by which man may get to know the Absolute.

Solovyov's concern with 'justification of the Good' is not confined to discussion of the Trinity and the nature of God, but extends to the *practical* sphere. He took the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth to be the supreme Christian goal: the 'Kingdom of God' must supersede the 'kingdom of Caesar', and the precepts of the Gospels must replace the secular values of temporal kingdoms and of self-assertive man. Man's full and free conformity to the Will of God in personal moral conduct and in the very ordering of the community would, on Solovyov's account, provide the desired *manifestation* of the Good in the created order. Solovyov envisaged an eventual spiritual transfiguration (*preobrazovanie*) of the created order;[23] indeed, it is this hope that particularly animates the pages of his *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*.[24] Adopting a central episode (and also the appropriate imagery) from the Old Testament for a poem entitled 'Into the Promised Land' (*V zemlyu obetovannuyu*, 1886), the philosopher expressed his deep hope that the community of men (here exemplified by the Jewish nation) will accept Divine *guidance*.[25] In the poem, as in the Old Testament, Yahweh requires moral purity on the part of men:

> Preserve My testament:
> With pure heart and strong soul,
> Be true to Me on inclement and on clear days.[26]

In the poem Yahweh promises His guidance, but also seeks man's *active* commitment to the Good. Solovyov's affirmation of the Good as the ultimate goal for free and conscious man involves two all-important elements:

(a) the notion that humanity, taken as a whole, requires divine grace and guidance, and that these are made available to man through the Person and the teachings of Christ;
(b) the notion that, individually and collectively, man must undertake *actively* to oppose evil.

Solovyov felt that it was especially necessary to recognise the second of these points, for the reason that man is susceptible to tragic deception in this matter. His celebrated tale *A Short Story about Antichrist* (*Kratkaya povest' ob antikhriste*),[27] which was appended to the work *Three Conversations*, conveys this notion very forcefully. In the apocalyptic events described here, the figure who finally proves to be the Antichrist misleads the vast majority of men by assuming the role and activity of an enlightened benefactor of humanity. His far-reaching plans for the reorganisation of human society meet with a very enthusiastic reception. The really 'Satanic' nature of his reforms and of his own person is not recognised until a very late stage in his 'reign'. Solovyov's fictional Antichrist is shown as unacceptable because his actions are grounded in a self-regarding, self-affirming will. Czeslaw Milosz comments on the import of the tale in his essay 'Science Fiction and the Coming of Antichrist':

> Here Solovyov is in complete accord with apocalyptic folklore, which saw the cause of evil in the universe as the rebellion of an angel of great wisdom and beauty: that angel preferred himself to God. Solovyov is one of those pessimistic philosophers who hold that every ego repeats the act of the fallen angel; it cannot be otherwise in the order of Nature, except through the intervention of divine grace.[28]

Being so concerned with self-assertion, the Antichrist does not take the real welfare of mankind into consideration, and his reforms are, ultimately, sterile or destructive. (Various points of comparison exist between Solovyov's Antichrist and Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, and scholars have already taken up this subject.)[29]

The preoccupation with apocalypse and conflict that marked the last decade of Solovyov's life, and especially the years 1898 to 1900, is treated in Chapter 9. The texts analysed there convey the way the philosopher sought to establish an historical (and symbolic) parallel between the Byzantine Empire which fell to the Muslims in

1453 and the Russian Empire of the late nineteenth century. He was deeply disturbed by the idea that Russia, which he viewed as the eminent guardian of authentic Christian culture and values (especially in his writings of 1880 to 1890), might suffer defeat at the hands of a non-Christian people from the East. With increasing intensity and dread, he anticipated a major confrontation between Christian and non-Christian peoples. His famous poem 'Panmongolism' (1894), which warns of this stark prospect, was intended to incite Russians to avert their own 'fall'. In the poem and in his *Byzantinism and Russia* (1896) Solovyov urged his Russian readers to forego their complacent ways, to recognise the danger they faced (both physical and moral) and, finally, to defend Christian values in an active way, exposing the various forms of falsehood which the Byzantines had allowed to undermine their society. Solovyov's fears regarding this major conflict find their expression in his last major work *Three Conversations* (*Tri razgovora*). In his preface he describes the content of the book as 'these "conversations" about evil, about the military and the non-violent struggle against it' (*eti "razgovory" o zle, o voennoy i mirnoy bor'be s nim*).[30] He accepted that cases exist when war is the single effective means to oppose and eradicate evil. For this reason Solovyov does not scorn the 'imperfect' means that the general and the diplomat use in the defence of humane values:

> Only the very principle of evil and falsehood is wrong, but not those means of struggle with [evil] such as the soldier's sword or the diplomat's pen. . .[31]

This position is fundamentally different from the position which Lev Tolstoy adopted in the years after his spiritual crisis and conversion. Both Tolstoy and Solvyov had a realistic understanding of men's capacity for evil and of all the obstacles which prevent them from living in harmony. Both men had, at some point in their life, been profoundly attracted to the pessimism of Schopenhauer, but each, in his turn, sought *Christian* solutions. The *ethical* element in Christian teaching held paramount importance for Tolstoy as well as for Solovyov: they both believed that the critical impulse for spiritual regeneration comes from *within* man,[32] from a 'change of heart' and an increased awareness of the need for a 'break' with one's former sinful ways. Both men believed that this interior revolution in one's feelings and perceptions profoundly alters the

individual's relations to the world about him. Tolstoy and Solovyov also share common ground when they write that the Christian bears responsibility for improving the community of which he is a member, and both men were highly critical of attempts to evade that responsibility (see Chapter 8).

The differences between the religious thought of Tolstoy and of Solovyov were, in certain respects, great and irreconcilable. As regards the doctrinal content of Christianity, they were separated by Tolstoy's inability to accept the Resurrection of Christ.[33] But aside from this fundamental difference, there were two central matters about which they held opposing and mutually exclusive views. These were, firstly, the question of where to assign blame for the evils of our world; secondly, the question of which is the effective and morally acceptable means to combat evil.

Briefly, it may be said that Tolstoy wanted to re-establish the Gospel precepts as the central, guiding code for the individual and society, but he concluded that the traditionally accepted representatives of authority in society, the high-ranking clergy, judiciary and so forth, belied the very code they formally acknowledge through their acquisition of wealth, rank and power. He consequently disputed the worth of those institutions (the Church, the law-courts, military tribunals and such like) which regulate men's affairs, and he advocated that individuals who were truly preoccupied with their own spiritual development should *withhold* their support from these traditionally respected, but actually corrupt institutions.

Solovyov viewed this question entirely differently. He was as aware as Tolstoy of the great discrepancy between the *ideal* conditions that would best suit man's needs and the *actual* unsatisfactory conditions of his present life. But he believed that Christian teaching provides the *means* to recognise the ideal goal – the *summum bonum* – and the *way* (*put'*) to attain it. It was his view that the various institutions through which we organise our lives and social relations are, plainly, imperfect, but he did not consider Tolstoy's kind of absolute denial of their worth to be appropriate. He believed it was man's duty to use the imperfect means at his disposal in realizing a better world, a world that conforms more truly to the Gospels' depiction of 'the Kingdom of God'.

Solovyov did *not* regard the traditional representatives of authority in society as being above criticism: while he accepted the institution of monarchic rule, he deplored the abuse of temporal

power – especially when monarchs threatened the autonomy of the Church. He was equally prepared to criticise the clergy for undue interference in temporal matters or, indeed, for complete subservience to the monarch. His ambitious plans to inaugurate a theocratic form of government were designed to restore Church–state relations to a sound basis, where each of these institutions is free and where each has effective charge of its own affairs while not actually being entirely separate from the other.

Solovyov's article 'On Clerical Power in Russia' (*O dukhovnoy vlasti v Rossii*), written in 1881, provides a very noteworthy example of his outspoken criticism of the Church. In that article he acknowledges that the Russian Church has achieved great moral status at certain times in its history, and that it really led society.[34] On the other hand, he notes the tendency of the clergy to become a submissive partner of the Tsars, and he deplores that betrayal of its proper calling. Referring to the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church and tracing some of its regrettable past history, Solovyov writes:

> First, under Nikon [in the 1650s] it was drawn by the *state crown*, then it firmly grasped the *state sword*, and finally it was obliged to put on the *state uniform*.[35] (Solovyov's italics)

Solovyov's acceptance of the *imperfection* of the Church and the weakness of its representatives accords with the traditional Christian teaching on the 'visible' Church here on earth and the 'invisible', heavenly and perfect Church. Solovyov's view of the seriously erring Russian clergy, presented in 'On Clerical Power in Russia', may be set next to his view of the Church given in his Introduction to *The History and Future of Theocracy*[36] – the contrast between these passages is certainly illuminating. In *The History and Future of Theocracy* we see the Church portrayed in terms of a unanimous community of believers, a Church that has *attained* harmony. The views of Tolstoy and Solovyov regarding the institutions which regulate human society could hardly be further apart. The contrast is succinctly expressed by N. A. Vasil'ev at the beginning of his perceptive article comparing their approach to this range of ideas:

> In all forms of social life, in government, law etc., Solovyov sees the manifestation of the Good and therefore, in contrast to

> Tolstoy, [he] justifies them, though their point of departure is the same.[37]

The crucial question of man's proper moral response to evil led Tolstoy and Solovyov to entirely different and mutually opposed conclusions. Both men accepted that Christ proclaimed 'the Kingdom of God' and sought to eradicate evil, but Solovyov responded very critically to Tolstoy's uncompromising and *literal* interpretation of Christ's words on 'turning the other cheek'.[38] Solovyov's polemic against the central Tolstoyan doctrine of 'non-resistance to evil' (*neprotivlenie zlu*), which we find in *Three Conversations*, was intended to establish that this doctrine has no proper Christian basis.

Tolstoy sought to honour the fundamental Christian commandment 'Thou shalt not kill', and to honour it both in spirit and in the letter he deemed it right to condemn all forms of killing. In practice he persuaded men to refuse military conscription, holding that it is better for Christians to suffer imprisonment for this refusal to kill than to submit to the state's immoral, anti-Christian legislation. (Tolstoy's defence of the pacifist religious sect called the '*Dukhobors*' was inspired by this belief in the right of religious believers not to cooperate with a state that enforces immoral laws, laws violating the absolute commandment not to kill). In Solovyov's view, adherence to this uncompromising stance would, on some occasions, cause believers to condone evil actions that could be prevented through active opposition on the part of someone truly concerned and compassionate.[39] Solovyov held that in certain extreme instances the Good could be better served by actively opposing evil than by non-resistance. Furthermore, he personally felt obliged to draw attention to the weaknesses of the Tolstoyan creed; he regarded it as deceptive, harmful, and opposed to the spirit of the New Testament.[40]

SOLOVYOV'S VIEW OF 'MYSTICAL APPREHENSION' (*MISTICHESKOE VOSPRIYATIE*)

At the very outset of his scholarly career, Solovyov addressed himself to the central problems of epistemology. He undertook a detailed evaluation of the claims presented in the major Empiricist and Rationalist accounts of human knowledge. He recognised the

influence and importance of Empiricism and of Rationalism in Western Europe, and his extensive examination of those lines in philosophy is provided in three of his earliest works. These are: *The Crisis of Western Philosophy, The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* and *A Critique of Abstract Principles.* Solovyov exposed the defects of the Empiricist and the Rationalist accounts of the acquisition of knowledge. In *The Crisis of Western Philosophy,* the Master's Thesis that won him very wide scholarly recognition, he criticised the exclusive claims of both Schools and demonstrated the untenable nature of their conclusions. On Solovyov's account, the Empiricists are led to a plain *reductio ad absurdum,* for their premises and following argument oblige them to assert that there is sensation without specific content and without a sensing subject. Likewise, the premises and following argument of the consistent Rationalist lead him to a philosophically untenable position, for he is obliged to defend the notion of pure thought without specific content and without a thinking subject.[41]

The Crisis of Western Philosophy begins with a statement of Solovyov's belief that *exclusively* theoretical philosophy now belongs to the past.[42] He writes, also, that this conviction is significantly different from the normal negative attitude towards philosophy that may be found in Positivism, for it gives equal weight to speculative philosophy (metaphysics) and to the Empiricist direction of philosophy.[43]

In this work the author confines himself almost entirely to *criticism* of the positions adopted by various West European schools and individual philosophers. He shows, for instance, that materialism actually (but unwittingly) goes *beyond* the confines of the empirical, for it assigns *absolute* significance to empirical matter (*empiricheskoe veshchestvo*), and this is a procedure which conflicts with the fundamental premise of materialism.[44] Another brief example of Solovyov's critical treatment of European philosophies may be seen where he discusses the *rejection of metaphysics* by both main streams of philosophical thought in Europe. He writes that their rejection of metaphysics originates in the particular limitations and one-sidedness of *those* streams of thought. This, he says, is clearly demonstrated by the fact that those philosophers who attempt to overcome that 'one-sidedness' (particularly Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann) come to *reinstate* metaphysics in their own systems.[45]

The concluding words of *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* merit

special attention: the young philosopher (twenty-one years old when he wrote the work) felt confident enough to assert, on the basis of his critique and of his very wide-ranging reading in theology, that the findings of Western philosophical thought, which it expresses in the form of *rational knowledge*, prove to be those same truths which theological teachings of the Christian East have affirmed. Eastern theologians express those truths through *faith* and *spiritual contemplation* (*dukhovnoe sozerstanie*).[46] This emphatic and positive conclusion pointed towards the kind of study undertaken by Solovyov in subsequent works, especially in *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* and in *A Critique of Abstract Principles*. Solovyov aimed to set out the major lines for a synthesis of theology, philosophy and science. He was convinced that mysticism plays a role of supreme importance in this synthesis, and therefore he was especially anxious to delineate the distinguishing features of *mystical apprehension*. Solovyov affirms the high status of mysticism *as a form of knowledge* in Chapter II of *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*:

> Mysticism, according to its absolute character, has foremost significance, defining the supreme principle and the ultimate goal of philosophical knowledge; empiricism, according to its material character, serves as the external basis and at the same time as the final application or realization of higher principles; and finally, the rational, specifically philosophical element, in line with its chiefly formal character, appears as the intermediary or the general link of the whole system.[47]

Here one may see very clearly the wide frame of reference of Solovyov's discussion of mysticism and mystical apprehension. His final claim in *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, namely that West European philosophy led, eventually, to recognition of the same truths apprehended by theologians of the Christian East, would *not* have been accorded serious consideration by the Positivists if Solovyov had neglected to examine the fundamental premises of Empiricism at the outset. Comte's Positivism exerted an extraordinarily deep influence on intellectual thought, particularly in Russia during the 1860s and 1870s. In 1898 Solovyov himself looked back on that period, and he called this preoccupation with Positivism a form of idolatry (*idolopoklonstvo*)[48] which it was necessary to check. S. M. Luk'yanov notes that a slight reaction against the dominance

of Positivist ideas had begun in Russian universities,[49] and this was marked by the publication of one or two critical studies of the Positivist viewpoint. (Luk'yanov specifically mentions a competent critical study written by V. Ya. Tsinger (1836–1907) of the University of Moscow).[50] These books appeared just ahead of Solovyov's Master's Thesis of 1874, but it was his work which represented a serious critical questioning of the bases of the whole doctrine and which created a significant impact in educated circles.

On the basis of the foregoing observations, it would be correct to say that Solovyov's enquiry into the nature and validity of mystical apprehension, although so greatly shaped by his reading in Patristic theology and Cabbalistic literature, cannot be divorced from contemporary nineteenth-century scholarly discussion of Empiricism, Rationalism and Positivism. Leading Slavophiles such as Alexey Khomyakov had devoted great attention to studying the predominant trends in West European thought, and this served them in their attempts to delineate the distinctive features of Slav and Orthodox thought. Solovyov followed their example of submitting West European ideas to serious critical study, and the content and conclusions of his Master's Thesis indeed supported the fundamental Slavophile analysis.

In *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (Chapter II) Solovyov discusses the possibility of there being any true knowledge. Referring to his earlier findings contained in *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, he reminds us of the absurd and untenable conclusions offered by consistent Empiricism and Rationalism.[51] One is confronted with a choice between two options, writes Solovyov: given the untenability of the Empiricist and Rationalist claims about knowledge

> . . . one must generally deny any true knowledge and adopt the viewpoint of absolute scepticism, or else one must admit that the sought-after [element] in philosophy is contained neither in the real being of the external world, nor in the ideal being of our reason, that it is known neither by means of the empirical, nor by means of purely rational thought.[52]

This choice of alternatives eventually proves to be a choice between absolute *scepticism* and the admission that *mysticism* may offer the satisfactory solution to the question of 'true knowledge'.

Solovyov asserts that mystical philosophy permits man to

recognise that he is *not* purely idea (*predstavlenie*) or being (*bytie*); he is, indeed, *greater* than these, and he may, consequently, learn something of essential being (*suschee*).[53] Consistent with his entire criticism of abstract philosophy and with his attempt to evolve a 'vital' philosophy, Solovyov writes:

> The authentic truth, complete and vital, itself contains its own reality and its own reason, and it transmits these to all else (*soobshchaet ikh vsemu ostal'nomu*). In accordance with this, the subject of mystical philosophy is not the world of phenomena, reduced to our sensations, nor the world of ideas, reduced to our thoughts, but the vital reality of beings in their internal living relations; this philosophy is concerned not with the external order of phenomena, but with the internal order of beings and their life, which is defined by their relationship with the primordial being.[54]

SOLOVYOV'S TYPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS

Solovyov's interest in the typological classification of religions is clearly apparent in his very first piece of writing to be published, that is, in the article 'The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism', (*Mifologicheskiy protsess v drevnem yazychestve*, 1873).[55] Other works that merit consideration in this context are: *Lectures on Godmanhood* (1877–81), *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics (1883), Judaism and the Christian Question* (1884), *The History and Future of Theocracy* (1885–87), *The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it* (1886), *China and Europe* (1890), and *Byzantinism and Russia* (1896). It can be seen that Solovyov's concern with the classification of religions spans his entire career.

The scheme according to which Solovyov eventually classified the world's religions is itself an interesting one. In places his analysis is highly informative, and it may be seen from the opening pages of his 'The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism' that he was extremely well acquainted with the specialist literature on the history and development of religion. Furthermore, the young Solovyov was aware of contemporary discussion and controversies in his field: he assimilated the ideas of preceding scholars and, where necessary, submitted their conclusions to criticism.[56] It is

plain that in this very first published article Solovyov sought to deepen his readers' understanding of the mythological process partly by avoiding the over-simplification of previous accounts,[57] and also – on the positive side – by introducing fresh material for examination and elaboration. He himself appreciated the work done on this subject by Schelling and Khomyakov, and he felt that contemporary scholarly discussion of the mythological process would benefit from a closer reading of their research.[58] Solovyov considered the religious beliefs of primitive man to be a singularly important subject for study,[59] and he aimed to contribute a satisfactory account of the central stages in the development of early religious belief:

> Having mentioned, with due gratitude, the works of these two little appreciated, solitary thinkers [Schelling and Khomyakov], we attempt – not without their help – to indicate the general course of ancient religious development in its main phases.[60]

Consideration of Solovyov's classification of religions generally (not just of the ancient beliefs studied in his first article) facilitates the task of evaluating his religious philosophy and his methodology. (For an analysis of Solovyov's comparative methodology, see Chapters 8 and 9.)

Certain questions tend to figure at the centre of any study of, or discussion of, religion: the religious philosopher needs to determine whether or not the essential nature of the Absolute Divine Being is in any sense manifest or intelligible to men. It must be asked whether or not that Absolute Divine Being enters into any direct contact or relationship with beings in the phenomenal order of existence. (This is the crucial question regarding the transcendence and/or immanence of God in relation to the phenomenal order.) If, indeed, the notion of direct contact or relationship can be accepted, then the religious philosopher must ascertain how the truth concerning God's relationship to the phenomenal, natural order may best be conveyed to men. Fourthly, it will be necessary for him to judge whether the Absolute Divine Being is benevolent in His intentions and in His actions towards creaturely beings, and whether He provides for human freedom or subjects man to necessary laws.

Solovyov's discussion of these matters has already been traced in some detail (especially in Chapter 5). In Chapter 4 specific mention

was made of Solovyov's criticism of Deism and Pantheism because of their exclusive assertion of God's transcendence and His immanence respectively. His critique of *absolute dualism* also figured in the foregoing account of his central teachings (Chapter 4). A brief examination of Solovyov's first published article will show the importance he attached to the task of correctly classifying the world's religions.

'The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism' is a work that not only traces the development of religious ideas and practices, but also focuses upon the classification of religions according to their predominant characteristics. The article is devoted to a brief, but quite detailed examination of the Vedic literature of India.[61] The author's choice was dictated by the special significance of the Vedic religion as the accepted prototype for the Aryan religions in general:

> The Vedic religion, as has been proved by the investigations of scholarly comparative philology, is essentially identical to the primordial religions of all other Indo-European peoples – Iranian, Hellenic, Latin, Celts, Germans, Liths and Slavs – so without [making] any great error, it is possible to accept the Vedas as a monument of the primordial general Aryan religion.[62]

Solovyov cites the eminent Orientalist Max Müller's description of the Vedic religion as one where the 'deities' have no fixed, distinctly defined attributes.[63] The Vedic deities tend to be viewed as the various facets of one supreme deity.[64] Solovyov then presents the problematic choice we must make when considering the nature of the Vedic deities. Given that the Vedic religion cannot be accepted as the *absolutely* primordial religion, we are obliged to decide whether the Vedas constitute a *monotheistic* development of an earlier polytheism or whether, on the other hand, they themselves represent the breaking down into multiple forms of an original monotheism?[65]

From a discussion of the specially high status of the deity Varuna and his inaccessible nature (page 10 of the article), Solovyov moves on to explain that the deity can be known only by his *external* manifestations in the visible world.[66] His article traces the increasing *externalisation* that takes place in the mythic accounts of deities and their actions. A range of 'heavenly' deities in the different religions (Indian, Egyptian, Hellenic) yield to a succession

of 'sun' deities. The process is not merely one of externalisation, but also of *concretisation*.[67] The 'sun' deities are also to be distinguished from the purely heavenly deities by their ability or their need to descend to earth sometimes (as *'avatars'* in some cases, for the welfare of humanity).[68] These are depicted as *intermediaries* between heaven and earth.

Even this brief summary of Solovyov's argument shows sufficiently clearly his concern with the varying forms which men's conceptions of divinity take.[69] *Judaic* religious conceptions had particular significance for him, as his writings on theocracy and other subjects testify. Solovyov's own close affinity with Jewish spirituality allowed him to present the Jewish perspective in an exceptionally lucid way. For this reason it may be helpful to examine his typological description of Judaism first of all, and then the other important non-Christian faiths.

In the preface to his study of Judaism (*Judaism and the Christian Question*), Solovyov admits that his subject matter is complex, and that it requires special explanation.[70] However, while it is true that Judaism is a complex phenomenon that poses questions regarding religion, race and nationhood and the mutual inter-relation of these, one may relatively quickly discern which features of Judaism assumed greatest importance for Solovyov. His understanding of religion is deeply marked by the notion that one people who played an active role in man's earliest recorded history could be shown to have a unique and spiritually significant collective destiny. The destiny of this people, the Jews, was not solely apparent to non-Jews, but was *experienced* by themselves as distinct, as a reality which defined their responses, values and way of life. In Solovyov's view, theirs was a 'sacral' (non-secular) history, and one of the keys to understanding this people was their long and remarkable adherence to their God Yahweh.[71] The themes of divine guidance, leadership by morally worthy prophets, of aspirations, recurrent instances of weakness and 'falling away' from the path to the deeply desired homeland and goal – all these mark the Scriptural and historical records of the life of the Jews.

Solovyov underlines the point that the special designation of the Jewish people as 'the chosen people of God' was *not* an arbitrary matter.[72] The profound suitability of the ancient Jewish community depicted in the Old Testament as an instrument of God's Will was evident in the nature of their religious faith[73] and was further enhanced by their possession of certain qualities of national

character. Critically important was the lead that the Jews gave other nations in conceiving of the Absolute Divine Being as *personal*, as a Being with Whom men might enter into a relationship. Even *before* the true God was revealed to Abraham, Abraham himself had felt deeply dissatisfied with the veneration of elemental and demonic forces in nature:

> The forefather [of the Jews] Abraham, living among heathens and having not yet received any direct revelation of the true God, was not satisfied with, and was oppressed by, the cult of imaginary gods so appealing to all nations. Service to the elemental and demonic forces of nature was alien to the Jewish soul. The founder of Israel could not believe in that which is lower than man – he sought a personal and moral God, in Whom it would not be humiliating for man to believe. . .[74]

The various peoples that surrounded the Jews at the time of Abraham were preoccupied with magical rites or nature worship, while the people of Israel – under his leadership – renounced these as unsatisfactory, as unworthy of men. Solovyov writes that the people of Israel *earned* special consideration among the nations of the world:

> Having set themselves apart from paganism and by their own faith raised themselves above Chaldean magic and Egyptian wisdom, the founders and leaders of the Jews became worthy of divine selection.[75]

This moral eminence was affirmed by the setting up of a Covenant between God and His chosen people, and this form of agreement between God and mankind is the very basis of the Jewish religion, as Solovyov observes.[76] In treating this central ground of Jewish religious beliefs Solovyov adhered to standard interpretations of Old Testament history. He also accepted the central Christian notion that Christ's 'new' testament was founded upon mercy, and that it superseded the Judaic concern with *sacrifice*[77] (see Matt. 12,7).

The distinctive feature of Solovyov's account is his treatment of Jewish spiritual insights in the light of certain prominent traits in the national character. In the first place, he mentioned the Jews' strongly developed sense of 'self'. According to him, Jews have a keen sense of their own identity,[78] an identity that is variously

expressed in their individual person, in their family and in their common bond with the whole nation. This sense of identity is, for the most part, a positive asset, a factor that has contributed to the nation's survival when deprived of a homeland. This sense of 'self' influenced the Jews' approach to the spiritual, as Solovyov already ventured to show in the sixth lecture on Godmanhood.[79] In *Judaism and the Christian Question* he alluded particularly to the *strength* which the Jews' sense of identity lends them: strong and *self*-conscious man may rebel against God at times, but the 'struggle' between man and God is here viewed as fruitful:

> . . . A strong God chooses for Himself a strong man, a man who could struggle with Him; the self-essential God reveals Himself only to a self-aware personality; the holy God unites Himself only with a man seeking sanctity, [a man] capable of *active* moral accomplishment (*podvig*).[80] (Solovyov's italics)

The reference, here, to '*active* moral accomplishment' is noteworthy. It accords particularly with the emphasis placed upon the active moral leadership of the Jewish prophets.[81] According to Solovyov, it was the task of the prophets to rectify the *negative* effects of the Jews' self-assertion, a self-assertion that was, in *their* spirituality and lives, a generally desirable feature:

> . . . From this it is clear that the authentic religion which we find among the Israelite nation does not exclude, but on the contrary *requires* the development of the free human personality, its feeling of self, its awareness of self, the activity of [that] self.[82]

Solovyov shows an astonishing degree of approval for this special 'self-affirming' type of spirituality. His approval can even be gauged by his carefully chosen words of criticism directed against the type of man with a weakly developed sense of his own identity:

> . . . A man [who is] weak by nature is not capable of a strong spirituality. Exactly likewise, a man without personality, characterless and with a weakly developed awareness of self, cannot understand how one should [attain] the truth of the *self-essential* Divine Being. Finally, the man in whom the freedom of moral self-determination is paralysed, who is incapable of *beginning an action* from his own part [his own initiative] is

> incapable of accomplishing a [moral, praiseworthy] deed, of attaining sanctity – for such a man godly sanctity will always remain as something external and alien – he will never be 'a friend of God'. . . .[83]

This particular passage merits special consideration, for it presents man's attainment of truth and of sanctity as greatly dependent upon an active assertion of the will. The passage stands in sharp contrast to all Solovyov's numerous references to self-denial (*samootritsanie, samootrechenie*) as the eminent means to sanctity.

The above passage from *Judaism and the Christian Question* might usefully be examined in the light of the words from the *Book of Wisdom, 6,* 12 and 15–16: the idea expressed by Solovyov, namely, that man must be willing to *start out* on the path to sanctity, is contained in these evocative Biblical verses. The notion put forward here is that Divine Wisdom comes out to *meet* the man who actively seeks Her, and She Herself seeks out those worthy of Her. Solovyov writes of the need to take the initiative[84] (*nachat' deystvie iz sebya*) or, rather, criticises the person unable to do so. He notes that not only in its traditional form, but even in its most recent form Judaism has continued to embody a special combination of human energy and very deep-lying belief in God.[85]

The particular form of moral courage which Solovyov had in mind, when writing the passage on strong and assertive forms of spirituality, could be attributed equally to individuals and to a whole people. The spirituality of the Jewish people attracted the philosopher personally, as his Jewish friends and acquaintances noted. Their appreciative acceptance of Solovyov was, in part, because his attitude to Judaism contrasted so greatly with the rather prevalent anti-Semitism of the period. But further than this, some Jewish scholars were amazed by Solovyov's readiness to become properly informed about Judaism, learning sufficient Hebrew to read the Scriptures in that language, studying the Torah at length, Talmudic literature and the related critical material. F. Getz, who assisted Solovyov in his study of Hebrew and in the correct interpretation of Judaic spiritual literature, writes that this deep study bore great fruit and is clearly evident in the philosopher's writings. In an informative article entitled 'On the Attitude of Vladimir Solovyov to the Jewish Question' (*Ob otnoshenii Vladimira Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu*), Getz writes about the philosopher's *The History and Future of Theocracy* in the following terms:

> This work serves as graphic proof of his thorough knowledge of the original text of the Sacred Scripture, of his deep understanding of the meaning of Biblical history.[86]

In *Judaism and the Christian Question* Solovyov affirmed that Israel was great in its faith (*Izrail byl velik veroy*).[87] In the passage which follows, he writes of faith as requiring uncommon spiritual resources; it is difficult to attain, but it *liberates* man:

> For its part, the energy of the free human principle manifests itself best of all in faith. There is a very wide-spread prejudice, according to which faith suppresses the freedom of the human spirit and positive knowledge extends freedom. But, in essence, the contrary is true. In faith the human spirit goes beyond the confines of given reality – it affirms the existence of such subjects which do not *compel* recognition – it freely acknowledges them. Faith is an *accomplishment of the spirit* (*podvig dukha*), revealing things unseen. The believing spirit does not passively await the influence of an external object, but boldly goes to meet it; it does not follow slavishly after phenomena, but anticipates them – it is free and active. As a free accomplishment of the spirit, faith has moral worth and merit. . .[88]

This explicit passage on the nature of faith allows one to appreciate a central aspect of Solovyov's personal spirituality: it is, indeed, a spirituality that values faith in a singular way, and that associates man's capacity to believe with courage and with justification of the Good. Getz felt that it was precisely Solovyov's *faith* that allowed him to penetrate the spirit of Judaism so very deeply:

> Himself inspired by an ardent faith and capable of a martyr's accomplishment in the service of the higher interests of religion, Vladimir Solovyov was bound to fathom the 'martyr-people' (*narod-muchenik*) with a genuine respect, [the people] whose whole history constitutes a unique religious accomplishment and a complete martyrdom in the name of faith.[89]

Solovyov's writings on sacred corporeality[90] are important for a proper assessment of his view of Judaic spirituality. His examination of the notion of sacred corporeality allows him to

(a) underline the *continuity* between Jewish Old Testament spirituality and Christian spirituality;
(b) consider some features of the Jewish national character normally seen negatively, and interpret them in the light of the Jew's particular spiritual history.

Solovyov accepted standard Christian interpretations of the Gospel teachings as a 'fulfilment' and 'completion' of the Old Testament Law. However, his words on sacred corporeality offer exceptional insights into the proximity of Jewish and Christian spirituality. Using as his point of departure the commonly made criticism of the *materialism* of the Jewish people, he writes that this materialism is of a special and 'religious' character. It originates in the Jews' tendency to seek an immediate and visible realization of any idea.[91] The Jews, argued Solovyov, appreciate those ideas that can bear results in the present life. Significantly, they also *resist* any rigid separation of the spiritual and the physical; the physical realm is, from their point of view, simply the ultimate manifestation of the spiritual.[92] Or, in other words, spirit penetrates and informs matter – the Jews perceive this, and consequently they find no proper cause to separate the spiritual and the physical.[93]

Solovyov's clarification of the notion of sacred corporeality in Jewish religious thought and practice allowed him to arrive at a remarkably positive interpretation of *asceticism*. He defined not just the very principle of asceticism, but succeeded in giving a positive significance to asceticism within the context of specifically Christian doctrine. He avoided any outright condemnation of material nature as evil (see the third of his *Lectures on Godmanhood*); indeed, he held that the view of material nature as itself inherently evil is not really tenable, and consequently simple 'mortification' of the flesh is not appropriate as a spiritual discipline. Rather, the true goal of asceticism, as Solovyov understood it, is 'a strengthening of the spirit *for a transfiguration of the flesh*'[94] (Solovyov's italics).

In Solovyov's view, the whole of the New Testament promises an eventual spiritual transfiguration of the natural world order, a promise guaranteed by the very Incarnation of God on earth as a man. Solovyov discerned in the Jews' understanding of sacred corporeality a basis for the Christians' positive acceptance of material nature not as inherently evil, but as receptive to spiritual influence.

In the philosopher's examination of Judaism there are yet other

significant instances of Christian adoption and development of Jewish religious thought and practice. These may be mentioned quite briefly.

In his article 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it',[95] Solovyov gives an account of the varying responses of the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes to the fundamental Scriptural teachings handed down by Moses. These three groups developed religious thought and practice along different lines, and Solovyov shows that each group or 'party' tended to adhere rather *exclusively* to their chosen way. The Sadducees resisted any form of innovation in the Scriptures; they honoured its ritual above all, sought to preserve the legacy of the past, and saw no need for any further or other response:

> For the Sadducees the Torah was the foundation upon which they did not wish to construct anything. Taking religion primarily from the ritual, priestly point of view, they saw in it the fact of the past, which it was necessary to acknowledge and preserve unchanged, but which did not oblige them [to undertake] any further action.[96]

Solovyov criticises this exclusive concentration on the past, and he describes how the Sadducees advanced their own interests and power in the name of adherence to the fundamental teachings of their religion.[97]

Those people genuinely committed to their faith sought a solution to this problem in Phariseeism.[98] The Pharisees accepted the Torah, but not solely as a fact of the past age, handed down unchanged to succeeding generations:

> Together with their opponents, the Sadducees, the Pharisees accepted the Torah as the immutable foundation of the religion, but for them this Torah was not only a fact of the past which must be venerated, but also the law of the present life, which must be fulfilled. The Pharisees did not want to admit a contradiction between the demands of the religion and real life; for them all life must proceed according to the religious law, and the divine precepts must be realized in all human affairs.[99]

Solovyov contrasts the Sadduccees' approach and the Pharisees' approach further by describing the former as 'mechanical' and the

latter as 'organic'. Some of the requirements of the religion handed down by Moses could not be practically and literally applied; therefore much interpretation of the Scriptures was required to ensure conformity to the spirit of the Scriptures. The Pharisees used the Judaic law not as an end in itself, but as a point of departure for the construction of a whole system of interpretation.[100]

The third party of religious believers making up the Jewish community looked not to the *past*, like the Sadducees, nor to the *present*, like the Pharisees, but to the *future*.[101] For them the word of God indicated, above all, *the ideal of the future*:

> These people, who received the name of Essenes, sought in religion not an external support for selfish ambitions, nor practical leadership in everyday life, but the highest perfection and beatitude.[102]

This party focused upon the *goal* of religion.[103] Solovyov regarded this group as deeply misguided in its exclusive assertion of the final goal of religion and in its seeming indifference to the *means* by which that goal might be attained:

> The place [for] the highest goals is the heavenly kingdom; it is not given freely, but is attained by effort. Therefore those who find themselves [confined], against their will, to an earthly path, must think about the factual supports and the formal foundations by which means one may more truly attain the goal. Here the [following] axiom is entirely applicable: the person who desires the goal desires the means, and they are: right and strength, law and rule.[104]

Solovyov is critical of those who forget the higher goals in their pursuit of the direct *means*, but he writes that their position is not as regrettable as that of people who look exclusively to the goal of ultimate perfection and fail to take any practical steps to attain their goal.[105]

Solovyov's thesis is that the idea at the heart of the Christian Gospels *embraces* all the positive features of the three different approaches he has described: 'The Gospel idea united in itself what was positive and true in the three Jewish parties.'[106] The *continuity* between Judaism and fundamental Christian teaching is underlined by the following image that Solovyov used:

> In general, [for] the construction of the temple of the New Testament there was no need to devise new material; for this work Christ and His apostles used those bricks which were at hand. Even the plan itself was not new in its component parts, but in their union, in the *completeness* (*tselost'*) of the religious ideal.[107] (Solovyov's italics)

It is appropriate to cite, here, the extremely favourable view which F. Getz, an informed and well-read Jew, formed of Solovyov's treatment of this subject:

> . . . The pages in which Vladimir Solovyov expounded his view of the above-mentioned religious parties, and of the relationship of Christianity to them, form some of the most instructive [material] that has ever been written on this subject, [his account being both] convincing in content and most penetrating and fine in form.[108]

The next area of Solovyov's typological classification of religions to be considered is his description (and criticism) of Islām. His ideas on Islām are striking for their consistency: he expressed them in the very early years of his career, in an article called 'Three Forces' (*Tri sily*, 1877); a lucid restatement and extension of his ideas is to be found in the third part of *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics* (1883); and he returned specifically to that subject in the mid-1890s, in an eighty-page account of the Prophet Mahommed's life and teachings.[109] But further than this, as will be established in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, Islām represents an important – even indispensable – element in Solovyov's later views on religion, culture and the course of history.

Solovyov's findings regarding the nature of Islām are presented most clearly in *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*. His whole view of the Islamic faith is determined by his deduction that the Christian faith provides the most *complete* religious revelation and that the central tenets and premises of Islām do not represent a 'complete' revelation. The critical difference between these faiths is the presence, in Christianity, of the teaching of *Godmanhood*. Solovyov writes: 'Christianity is the revelation of the perfect God in the perfect man.'[110] The *perfect man* is defined as one possessing human faculties in full measure who 'willingly and absolutely submits the human element in him to the higher Divinity'.[111]

Solovyov judged that Islām was deficient where due recognition of the human element is concerned. The uncompromising form of submission demanded in the Koran, he believed, deprives man of any degree of autonomy. The transcendence and might of God are acknowledged, as well as the gulf between God and creaturely beings. This view of a transcendent, almighty and unapproachable God is enforced, in Islām, by the absence of a *divine* 'mediator' (*posrednik*),[112] sent to assist and redeem mankind. Islām, according to Solovyov's account, presents a Divinity that lacks real ties with man – this is an *'inhuman God'*, (*bezchelovechniy bog*).

Solovyov writes that Islām may be compared not only with the authentic Christian revelation, alongside which its defective understanding of Divine–human relations is plain to see, but may also be compared with various of the early Christian heresies. He maintained that Islām resembles these heresies in a fundamental way: the doctrine of Godmanhood proved an obstacle that neither Muslims nor Christian heretics could accept.[113] However numerous and varied the early heresies were, they all coincided in their *denial* of the true God-man.[114] Some heretical teachings cast Christ as a 'prophet', but not as God; others denied the humanity of Christ.[115] The denial of Christ as a 'mediator' between Heaven and the created order led some to a rigid dualism, a complete opposition of divinity and creation.[116]

Solovyov maintained that the exclusive recognition of God's transcendence, which we find in Islām, is very close (in spirit and in content) to the early heretical teachings against which the Church had to defend itself, especially during the fourth and fifth centuries. However, he argued that one may still view Islām in a *better* light than the Manichean and other heresies cited in *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*. He readily acknowledged the consistent adherence of the Muslims to their Koranic moral code. While the teachings found in the Koran seemed to him less developed and penetrating from the spiritual point of view than the Christian code, faithful adherence to those teachings was, in his view, very commendable.[117] Here, as in other of the philosopher's works, the moral stature of true Muslim believers is set *higher* than that of the Christians in Byzantium.[118]

The above observations contain the central substance of Solovyov's views regarding Islām. He discerned two distinct, but related forms of rigidity here: the rigidity of Islamic society and the lack of individual freedom are stressed in his early article 'Three Forces', while *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics* presents a

picture of fundamental rigidity and exclusivity in religious conceptions.

It is now necessary to consider the other major category of non-Christian religions examined by Solovyov, namely those of the Indian sub-continent. In his first published article 'The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism' (1873) Solovyov made a study of Vedic literature, and he treated the Vedic religion as the prototype for the Aryan religions in general. The Vedic religion finds occasional mention in his later writings (as do the Vedāntic literature and Sankara's contribution to Indian religious philosophy). However, a close reading of Solovyov's critical observations regarding the non-Christian faiths reveals that it was Hinduism and, ultimately, Buddhism that, for him, most came to exemplify Indian spirituality. Also, it is very noteworthy that, as with his critical assessment of Islām, Solovyov formulated his views on Hinduism and Buddhism at a very early point in his career. (His references to Buddhism in the fourth of the *Lectures on Godmanhood* constitute a key passage in Solovyov's evaluation of that particular belief system. As the fourth lecture was first published in July 1877, one can confidently state that the philosopher had formulated the main lines of his critique of Buddhism by the Summer of 1877, at which time he was aged twenty four years.) I have already drawn attention to the *consistency* of Solovyov's statements regarding the character of the Islamic religion: in his study of the life of Mahommed, written in 1896, Solovyov holds the same fundamental view that he expressed in his article 'Three Forces' (1877). His negative view of the Christians in Byzantium is also highly consistent (see Chapter 8 and Chapter 9), restated in works as far apart as *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics* (1883)[119] and *Byzantinism and Russia* (1896). His evaluation of Buddhism was marked by the same degree of consistency, and there is no evidence to support the view that Solovyov's fundamental attitude towards Buddhism changed in the years after the publication of his *Lectures on Godmanhood.*

His evaluation of Buddhism comprises two elements, and these are:

(a) his examination of the Buddhist conception of the Absolute;
(b) his evaluation of the role that asceticism plays in Buddhism.

In the third and fourth of his *Lectures on Godmanhood* Solovyov treated both of these subjects, first criticising the pessimistic stance

of those who condemn nature as 'evil'.[120] His article on Indian philosophy in the *Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopaedia* states that the various schools of Indian philosophy all agree in their negative view of the world as evil and deceptive:

> As regards content, all the 'accepted' and a majority of the 'unaccepted' systems have one and the same negative view of the world and life as evil and deception, and with all of them the task is liberation (*moksa*) from this false existence.[121]

In the *Lectures on Godmanhood* Solovyov specifically cites Buddhism as a religious–philosophical system that views nature in negative terms.[122] He describes Buddhism as a more advanced religious view than nature worship, for the latter entails man's submission to arbitrary external phenomena, whereas Buddhism views nature negatively and is consequently detached from it and free from submission to it. Solovyov writes that in the first stage of religious development 'the Divine principle is hidden behind the world of natural phenomena' (*bozhestvennoe nachalo skryto za mirom prirodnykh yavleniy*).[123]

> In the following, second stage of religious development, the Divine principle reveals itself in its distinction and opposition to nature, as its denial, or as the absence of natural being, the negative freedom from it. This stage, distinctive, essentially, on account of its pessimistic and ascetic character, I call *negative revelation*; its purest type is represented by Buddhism.[124]

Solovyov concedes that Christianity has an ascetic element also, expressed in the Apostle John's words 'All the world lies in evil' (see the seventh lecture on Godmanhood).[125] But he argues that Christianity embraces *all* the foregoing stages of religious understanding: he asserts that Christianity includes the ascetic element present in Buddhism, a recognition of the ideal world, such as we find in Platonism, the view of the Divine Absolute as *personal* (the characteristically Judaic view), and the definition of God's nature as *triune*, which the philosophers of Alexandria elaborated.[126]

There are considerable grounds for believing that Solovyov's description of the 'ascetic' element in Buddhism is *determined* by his interpretation of Buddhist conceptions of the Absolute. At the beginning of the fourth lecture on Godmanhood he clearly

juxtaposes Buddhist and Christian conceptions of the Absolute: he classifies the Buddhist view of the Absolute as 'negative' and the Christian view as 'positive'.[127] On Solovyov's account, the Buddhists' refusal to provide positive definitions of the Absolute leads them to concentrate exclusively upon the *absence* of attributes and definitions relating to the Absolute. In their case, then, the Absolute is a 'nothing' (*nichto*). This view of the Absolute influenced their entire religious understanding and practice, according to Solovyov; it *necessarily* led the Buddhists to a very different spirituality from the spirituality which grew out of the 'positive' Christian view of the Absolute. He recognised the merit of Buddhist and other Indian spiritual teachings in liberating man from complete subjection to the natural elements, from nature worship; but he argued that the Indians' new-found freedom 'inebriated' them, causing them to lose themselves in subjective, trance-like states, where they renounced the 'world' and declined to *develop* their spiritual understanding. This view of Indian religious philosophy is presented in the tenth lecture on Godmanhood:

> In India the human soul was, for the first time, freed from the power of cosmic forces, seemingly inebriated by its own freedom, by its awareness of its own unity and its absolute nature; its inner activity is not connected with anything, it dreams freely, and in these dreams all the ideal fruits of humanity are already contained in embryo, all the religious and philosophical teachings, poetry and science, but all this is [in a state of] indistinct indefiniteness (*v bezrazlichnoy neopredelënnosti*) and confusion, as if in a dream all merges and is mixed up, all is one and the same, and therefore all is nothing. Buddhism has pronounced the final word of the Indian consciousness: all existing being and non-existing being are likewise just an illusion and a dream.[128]

In the same lecture Solovyov proceeds to explain how the philosophers of Ancient Greece evolved a more satisfactory view of the Absolute than the characteristic Indian view. He held that the particular achievement of the Greeks (best exemplified by Plato) was to liberate themselves not simply from external cosmic forces, but also from purely subjective self-contemplation:

> In the Graeco-Roman world the human soul appears free not only of external cosmic forces, but also of itself, of its own inner, purely

subjective self-contemplation in which, with the Hindus, it was immersed.[129]

Solovyov presents a picture of Buddhism, Hinduism and of Indian spirituality generally as inferior to Greek idealist philosophy, as the above passages show. This view of Indian religious thought extends, for Solovyov, to Taoism and other schools of Chinese religious thought: the seeming indistinctness and 'merging of concepts' alluded to in the above description of Buddhist thought[130] are, in Solovyov's view, characteristic of Taoism also (see Chapter 9).

I would argue that Solovyov was *sincere* in his attempt to evaluate Buddhist thought and the Indian religious philosophies objectively. The account of central Buddhist beliefs provided in *Lectures on Godmanhood* is not comprehensive or entirely sound, and this must diminish the value of his typological classification of religions. A number of Solovyov's conclusions regarding Buddhist thought require considerable modification in the light of scholarly research undertaken since his life-time. The limited availability of translations and commentarial literature on the subject accounts for some of the main defects of his account, and one cannot rightly blame him for the imbalance in his views when whole areas of Buddhist philosophy still remained unexamined. For instance, extensive research into Māhayāna Buddhist thought did not get established until after Solovyov's life-time: some of the most important pioneering work in this field (still valid now) was undertaken by Professor Th. Shcherbatsky during the 1920s and 1930s.[131] We may respect Solovyov for his desire to cover this field and for his readiness to examine the major texts of Indian religious thought and to evaluate them; at the same time, we need to exercise caution in our study of his conclusions, where necessary supplementing his account of Buddhist thought with the findings of Shcherbatsky and more recent specialists.

Above all, it needs to be noted that Solovyov's classification of Buddhism as a 'negative revelation' (*otritsatel'noe otkrovenie*) gives a misleading and incomplete view of the essential goals and character of Buddhism. The description provided by Solovyov must be qualified in a number of ways, and here my observations fall into two categories:

(a) those relating to the stated aims of the founder Sakyamuni

Buddha, and to his positive assertions regarding the spiritual life;

(b) those relating to Māhayāna Buddhist thought.

The very extensive use of a negative terminology in Buddhism is a striking and often disconcerting feature for anyone accustomed to the positive terminology widely employed in the Christian teachings and their interpretation. Concern with the problems posed by this negative terminology has to some degree directed attention away from the positive aims of Buddhism and of Sakyamuni Buddha himself. In his words immediately before his death he affirmed the worth of spiritual endeavour, advising his followers to work diligently for their salvation. The very fact that he spent numerous years teaching all monks and laymen who approached him about spiritual attainment indicates his concern with active *transmission* of his enlightened understanding, with an *affirmation* of the truths that he himself apprehended.

In this connection, it should be remembered that according to the Scriptural accounts of his life, Sakyamuni Buddha attained full enlightenment and then *hesitated* about conveying his understanding to other men. His compassion for men and his subsequent decision to teach them the path to full spiritual attainment must, surely, represent a profoundly positive aspect of Buddhism that is missed in Solovyov's references to 'negative revelation'. (The Buddha's compassionate decision to teach men, his concern for their welfare and for the welfare of all sentient beings is well conveyed, and indeed perpetuated, in the Māhayāna ideal of *Bodhisattvahood*: the Māhayāna Tradition stresses the particular merit of *Bodhisattvas*, that is, of those who temporarily renounce the very final stage of their own spiritual enlightenment so as to return to 'the world' and assist others to achieve salvation).

With regard to the actual content of Buddhist teaching, it is necessary to emphasize the following point. At the very heart of Buddhism lies the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. The first two of these Truths draw attention to the *impermanence* of worldly phenomena (the Truth of *aniccā*) and to the general condition of *suffering* of beings in the world (the Truth of *dukkhā*). It is not at all uncommon for European commentators to focus exclusively upon the Buddha's statements on these two Truths and to conclude that he preached a form of pessimistic and passive resignation. The essential importance and *indispensability* of the third and fourth

Noble Truths is too often overlooked. These are the Truths which affirm that there is indeed a possible *cessation* of suffering, and that there is a *path* to the cessation of suffering. The Path is described in very specific terms, under headings such as Right Understanding, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Attentiveness, which altogether make up the 'Eightfold Path', and its basis is *experiential*. It is the fruit of Sakyamuni Buddha's disciplined quest for truth, a programme of spiritual training that is itself highly rigorous, but which it would be wrong to characterise as solely a 'flight' from pain and suffering. It should be remembered that according to the Buddhist Scriptures, Sakyamuni Buddha specifically criticised the extreme asceticism of some spiritual masters in whose company he trained before his own enlightenment: he found their extreme austerity and their complete renunciation of the secular world unfruitful, and he responded to their extreme and narrow practice by elaborating the Middle Way as a viable path to spiritual understanding and virtue. Thus, his role in advancing spiritual understanding and practice could be seen as positive and creative, for he recognised the defects of a narrow asceticism and he developed his own teaching in another direction.

In addition to those positive affirmations contained in the third and fourth Noble Truths, we need to recall Sakyamuni Buddha's celebrated and important affirmation recorded in Uddana, VIII,3. It reads as follows:

> There is, oh monks, an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. If there were not this Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed, escape from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed, would not be possible.

If men were wholly and forever confined to the realm of 'the born, the originated, the created, the formed', then the spiritual endeavour would have no meaning, and it would be inefficacious. However, the Buddha affirmed the worth and rightness of the spiritual endeavour, and he stressed the *practical* aspect of his teaching and discipline (using the image of a raft that can take the aspirant to 'the Other Shore'). Here, in more specifically philosophical language, he affirms that man, who finds himself in the realm of 'the born, the originated, the created, the formed', and finds himself subject to the fundamental law of Dependent Origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), *may* attain the realm of 'the Unborn, the Unoriginated, the Uncreated, the Unformed'.

In order to gauge fully the positive aspects and emphasis of central Buddhist teaching which appear to have eluded Solovyov, one needs to consider the *means of instruction* chosen by the Buddha and by his followers. Here the weakness in Solovyov's account of Buddhist thought may be attributed to the comparative lack of reliable commentarial literature from which he suffered. As far as can be judged from his works and biography, Solovyov undertook no special study of the terminology of Buddhism. If one examines the fourth lecture on Godmanhood, one is obliged to conclude that he wholly accepted the view of Buddhism as a religious philosophy which conceived of, and defined, the Absolute as 'Nothing' (*Nichto*), as a pure *absence* of attributes. My contention is that unqualified assent to Solovyov's description of Buddhism as a 'negative revelation' (as here defined) leads one to under-estimate the subtlety of the Buddhist position, especially in the Mādhyamika formulation of it.[132]

In his book *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (1955), Professor T. R. V. Murti provides an extremely illuminating account of the dangers of dogmatic adherence to viewpoints and theories, and of the Buddha's way of countering that dogmatism.[133] (It is very noteworthy that Solovyov, who was especially concerned with criticism of dogmatic, exclusive views in philosophy and religion, failed to appreciate this essential aspect of the Buddha's teaching and approach.) The Buddha's teachings were adapted to suit the capacity of his pupils: Murti explains that when the Buddha discerned that his listeners might fall into the trap of true 'nihilism', then he modified the expression of his teaching on the non-substantiality of the soul so as not to lead them into error.[134]

As is extremely well shown in Professor Murti's book, and also in K. Venkata Ramanan's study *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*, the Buddha was especially concerned to rectify the various forms of dogmatism to which men are susceptible. Wholly in the spirit of the Buddha's criticism and correction of exclusive, extreme viewpoints, Nāgārjuna evolved a critical method designed to show up the *untenability* of theoretical views as *absolute*.[135] The effective pursuit of truth involves not simply intellectual rigour, but also the capacity of the aspirant to avoid clinging to one or other viewpoint. This is well conveyed by Ramanan:

> It is necessary to note that the utter unspeakability of things in this ultimate truth does not mean that they cannot even be spoken of in the mundane truth . . . The question is not one of

> speaking or not speaking, but of clinging or not clinging to the speech and the things spoken of.[136]

Ramanan stresses that Nāgārjuna's criticism of opposing views is *not* an end in itself:

> It is to be noted that śūnyatā as criticism is not an end in itself; as revelatory of the non-substantiality of mundane things, it is the means to the further realisation of the ultimate reality.[137]

This statement by Ramanan accords with the account provided by Murti, for whom the criticism of opposing, exclusive viewpoints is just the second of three stages in the Mādhyamika dialectic:

> . . . The dialectic reaches its fruition through three 'moments': the antinomical conflict of opposed views of the real advanced by speculative systems (*drstivāda*); their criticism, which exposes their hollowness (*śūnyatā*); and intuition of the Real in which the duality of 'is' and 'is not' is totally resolved (*prājña* – wisdom). It is the Absolute beyond Reason. Implicit in the process, *Prājña* guides the entire dialectical movement.[138]

Murti also shows that *ignorance* (*avidyā*), according to the exponent of Mādhyamika

> . . . is equated with ideal construction screening the real. The Real is known by uncovering it, by the removal of the opacity of ideas (śūnyatā of drsti). Philosophy performs this uncovering function. It is both this process and its culmination.[139]

In the light of Murti's and Ramanan's findings and of the important contributions of Shcherbatsky (whose study *Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*, published in 1927, they acknowledged and valued), the outright dismissal of the Buddhist notion of Śūnyatā as purely a principle of negation cannot be convincingly defended. There is a sense in which, writes Murti, Śūnyatā is even more positive and all-embracing than pure affirmation:

> [Śūnyatā] may even be taken as more universal and positive than affirmation. For, to affirm 'A is B', that a figure is a triangle, is implicitly to deny that it is a square or circle. Every affirmation

> implies an element of negation. Both affirmation and negation are determinations, limitations or negations . . . *Śūnyatā* is negation of negations; it is thus a reaffirmation of the infinite and inexpressibly positive character of the Real.[140]

Finally, I cite Shcherbatsky's seminal work *Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*. Shcherbatsky regarded it as inappropriate to translate the term *śūnyā* as 'void', for that usage is possible in common life 'but not as a technical term in philosophy'.[141] The whole import of the foregoing observations regarding the Mādhyamika critical method is highlighted by Shcherbatsky in the following passage:

> That the term *śūnyā* is in Māhayāna a synonym of dependent existence (*pratītya-samutpāda*) and means not something void, but something 'devoid' of independent reality (*svābhāva-śūnyā*), with the implication that nothing short of the whole possesses independent reality, and with the further implication that the whole forbids every formulation by concept or speech (*nisprapañca*), since they can only bifurcate (*vikalpa*) reality and never directly seize it – this is attested by an overwhelming mass of evidence in all the Māhayāna literature.[142]

I have attempted to convey some of the complexity of the Buddhist usage of negative terminology, citing authoritative scholars who have written on this subject. Even from the limited materials presented above, it should be apparent that Solovyov did not give a very extensive account of the Buddhist approach to the Absolute. He worked from translations of some of the major Hinayāna Scriptures, but appears to have accepted their negative terminology in a rather literal spirit. His approach to the study of Buddhism differs significantly from his approach to the study of Judaism. In the latter case, his personal affinity with the Jewish people, his admiration for their history, culture and achievements prompted him to explore their spiritual thought and practice in great depth. Buddhism (and the Indian spirituality which it represented, in his mind) only won his qualified acceptance as a belief system that was superior to nature worship and inferior to Greek idealist philosophy and to the Christian revelation.

Solovyov's various writings on the world religions were intended to establish the coherence and 'completeness' of Christian spirituality, and also to show the process whereby separate

elements such as the ascetic principle (in Buddhism), the view of the Absolute in 'personal' terms (in Judaism), developed and finally coincided in Christianity itself. This endeavour was an important part of Solovyov's over-all aim to 'justify the Good'. His religious philosophy was, in the final analysis, *Christocentric*: the seventh lecture on Godmanhood affirms that although Christianity has some elements in common with other religions and philosophies (asceticism, recognition of the ideal realm, and so forth), the completely new and distinct element in the Gospels was Christ's teaching about His own Person.[143]

Where Solovyov's survey of non-Christian beliefs is concerned, I have drawn attention to certain weaknesses and imbalance in his description and classification of those beliefs, while also acknowledging his impressive assimilation of Judaic religious ideas and his appreciation of their historical and cultural context.

SOLOVYOV'S ARGUMENTS FOR THE THEOCRATIC ORGANISATION OF SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

> Man alone can *gradually* adopt divine grace in an *unceasing* struggle with his own nature and with external hostile forces, *perfecting himself* through the aid of his own efforts and attainments.[144] (Solovyov's italics)

Book II of Solovyov's *The History and Future of Theocracy* opens with an affirmation of human freedom. The philosopher describes man as being endowed with a unique degree of freedom to choose between 'good' and 'evil'.[145] Man does not make *one* choice that binds him forever to 'good' or 'evil', for his two-fold nature, spiritual and natural, allows the possibility of a continuing choice.[146] His freedom is, furthermore, a freedom to *perfect himself*, to overcome the limitations of his natural condition, and, finally, to *improve* material nature itself.[147] The New Testament shows man as 'created in the image and likeness of God',[148] and is filled with assurances that he can attain 'plenitude of being' (*polnota bytiya*). In order to achieve this desirable end, he must, according to Solovyov, consciously recognise the Good and order his activities so that they increasingly conform to, and outwardly express, that Good.

In *Justification of the Good*, Solovyov's fullest exposition of his moral philosophy, he defined the three bases of morality as being

shame, pity and piety (*styd, zhalost', blagogovenie*). He considered that if we adopt these as the bases for action, we can determine how man should act

(a) in relation to what is beneath him (purely material nature);
(b) in relation to beings on the same level as himself (that is, other conscious beings);
(c) in relation to what is above him (the Divine).[149]

In Solovyov's view, man's relation to material nature should be that of benevolent and responsible domination. This attitude finds expression in his *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, and his observations regarding our responsibility for the ecology of the earth are even more pertinent and urgent in the late twentieth century than they were during his life-time. Solovyov's notion of the way man should act in relation to his fellow men becomes especially evident in his writings on *theocracy*. His writings on theocracy also reveal much about Solovyov's conception of man's relation to the Divine, and they show his distinctive emphasis upon the need for collective humanity's voluntary, wholly free submission to the Divine Will. He taught that the Kingdom of God must be realized not just within the heart of the individual man, but also externally and practically (*na dele*), through man's various creative and other activities. Solovyov's affirmation of spiritual values – so central to his life's work – was very closely bound with his conviction that, at least potentially, human society itself represents a 'spiritual community'. He examined the principles and practice of rule in various societies (Islamic, West European, Roman, Judaic and others) and endeavoured to establish which form of rule (or social ideal) best suits humanity. Rejecting the Islamic and Roman models of rule as defective,[150] he concentrated greatly upon the Judaic conception of theocratic rule. As shown in Chapter 5, he deeply admired the form of theocratic rule which the Jews aimed to establish. He acknowledged the efforts of the Jewish people to place their religion at the very centre of their communal (and individual) life, and he criticised only the exclusive attention to ritual (on the part of the Sadducees), to interpretation of the Law (on the part of the Pharisees, who reacted against the Sadducees), and the exclusive, extreme reaction of the Essenes against both the former groups.[151] Ultimately, Solovyov was concerned with illustrating the *evolution* that had taken place in men's understanding of religion:

his *Judaism and the Christian Question* expresses the idea that in the New Testament the Judaic conception of theocracy is perfected and extended.[152] He asserts that in Christianity the theocratic ideal is freed of a narrow, exclusive application on the purely national level, while the Jews tended to apply it too much to their own nation.[153] His writings on the specifically Christian understanding of theocracy (writings which belong, for the most part, to the decade 1880 to 1890) stress that the relations between Church and the temporal state need to be rectified. He felt it necessary to clarify the nature of the Church's authority and of the State's authority, to define (or re-define) the inter-relation of the Church and the State in true Christian society. He considered that rivalry between these two central institutions of the Christian community was profoundly harmful, and that it deferred the realization of the 'Kingdom of God on earth'.

Judaism and the Christian Question and *The History and Future of Theocracy* provide a very detailed picture of the Judaic theocratic ideal, and these works show how very precisely the authority and functions of the Jewish High Priest, King and Prophet were set forth in the Old Testament. Solovyov used the Judaic model of theocratic rule to very good effect in his own account of priestly and temporal rule in the Christian community. He acknowledged, for instance, that the conception of 'priesthood' and the understanding of the Prophet's calling and status were very far developed in the Jewish community[154] (as is recorded in the Old Testament), and he showed that the Christian conception of 'priesthood' and prophecy draws much from the Judaic interpretation of these.

As previous chapters have shown, Solovyov read very extensively in most fields of religious thought, and this applies also to his reading on the subject of theocracy. He supplemented his reading of Jewish spiritual literature and of the Old Testament with wide reading of Roman Catholic sources. On occasion he cited the ideas of Joseph de Maistre (on whom he wrote a quite lengthy entry for the *Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopaedia*).[155] His attitude of increasing sympathy towards Catholic theologians, philosophers and historians, in the latter part of the 1880s, actually caused considerable regret and suspicion in Russia, among his readers and in government circles. His close association with Jesuit priests in Western Europe was criticised, and many Orthodox were prepared to believe that Solovyov personally had become a Roman Catholic.[156] His writings on theocracy appeared to such disen-

chanted readers simply as further evidence of the philosopher's new allegiance to Rome. His critical stance towards the Slavophiles, expressed in articles from 1883 onwards,[157] rather obscured the fundamentally pro-Slavophile content of his theocratic hopes. He maintained a belief in Russia as the rightful guardian of authentic Christian values and culture long after his apparent defection to the pro-European and liberal publicists centred in Petersburg, such as A. N. Pypin (1833–1904). Evgeniy Trubetskoy considered that this faith in Russia's messianic role was unduly prominent in his conception of theocracy, and he submitted Solovyov's view to severe criticism. Dmitry Stremoukhov also drew attention to the prominence of ideas about Russia's glorious role as defender of Christian culture in the philosopher's treatment of theocracy. Both these scholars present convincing evidence to support the conclusion that Vladimir Solovyov cherished hopes about Russia's role that even *exceeded* the hopes of most Slavophiles regarding their native country. Stremoukhov actually argues that it is only with the advent of Solovyov that Slavophilism becomes *messianism* properly speaking:

> In essence, it is only with Soloviev that Slavophilism becomes true messianism. . .[158]

Trubetskoy writes:

> He [Solovyov] places such hopes in the theocratic ruler (*tsar'*), by comparison with which the Slavophile dreams may appear modest.[159]

In his article 'The Downfall of Theocracy in the Works of V. S. Solovyov' (*Krushchenie teokratii v tvoreniyakh V. S. Solovyova*),[160] Trubetskoy criticises Solovyov for illegitimately introducing temporal ideas on Russia's historical destiny into his religious philosophy.[161] He regards the philosopher's last work, *Three Conversations* (*Tri razgovora*) as valuable because there, he believes, Solovyov has overcome his preoccupation with Russia's destiny. Trubetskoy argues that the new view of world history presented in *Three Conversations* is significantly different from the theocratically-based views of his earlier years. In this new philosophy of history

> . . . the eternal, universal Christian ideal triumphs over the temporal dream of the great religious thinker and over the nationalistic romanticism of his youth.[162]

That Solovyov questioned the worth of the 'Third Rome' ideal *before* composing his last great work is clear in the opening pages of *Byzantinism and Russia* (1896). Interestingly, Trubetskoy suggests that he arrived at the idea through poetic intuition some time before he managed to argue his case in logical or historical terms.[163] His reference to the adherents of the 'Third Rome' ideal as Russia's 'flatterers' (*l'stetsy*) in his poem 'Panmongolism' (1894) is widely known and commented upon. But it is not so widely recognised that Solovyov treated this theme in discursive form as soon as two years later, in his *Byzantinism and Russia*.

Historical argument forms an important element in Solovyov's writings on religion. The very nature of the subject 'theocracy' entails the introduction of the historical perspective into the discussion of religious ideas. This is all the more true when the hopes for the actual foundation of a theocratic society are as immediate as they evidently were for Solovyov during the 1880s. Certain features of Russia's historical past induced him to hope that she might be especially suited to attaining Christian goals. Here Solovyov cited her capacity for *self-denial*, apparent – he argued – in the Russians' invitation to the Varangians to rule over them, and in Peter the Great's readiness to learn from West European countries and to submit his own country to European influence.[164] His high expectations of Russia's future destiny were, in all likelihood, sustained and considerably reinforced when his ideas on theocracy and especially on the reunion of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches won the admiration of Archbishop Strossmayer. Solovyov's reliance upon historical argument and upon ideas concerning culture is evident not only in his works on theocracy, but also in his evaluation and classification of religions. It should be said that to examine the specifically *historical* basis of Solovyov's understanding of theocracy would require a fuller, more wide-ranging study of Slavophilism than can be undertaken here.

In his writings on theocracy Solovyov was able to highlight numerous other facets of religious life and thought. The term 'theocracy' has extremely negative connotations, as far as most people are concerned, and is generally associated with the worst excesses of the Roman Catholic Church during the Inquisition.

Now it is also linked with the arbitrary and unenlightened regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, who set out quite consciously to establish an Islamic theocracy. Solovyov demonstrates that theocracy can be considered in a *positive* context, and he himself offers valuable insights in four major areas:

(a) in his treatment of Church-State relations in the Christian state;
(b) in providing a serious and informed reappraisal of Jewish spirituality generally, and of the Jewish, religiously-based ideal of community in particular;
(c) in his description of the Priest, the King and especially the Prophet as *spiritual types*;
(d) in his emphasis upon the *practical* application of religious teachings, in his insistence that not only the Christian philosopher, but all sincerely believing Christians are concerned, first and foremost, with 'justification of the Good'.

7

Scripture and Reason: A Dual Allegiance

From the exposition and examination of Vladimir Solovyov's religious philosophy in the previous three chapters it will be apparent that he sought to lead his readers towards a very profound reappraisal of Christian values. Although he maintained that the Church guides us in these matters, and that it provides safeguards against misunderstanding and false belief, he also saw the need for independent enquiry on the part of individual philosophers.[1] Solovyov explicitly criticised 'blind faith' and the wholly unquestioning acceptance of what we receive through tradition:

> Faith, when it is only fact accepted through tradition, is an extremely insubstantial and unsteady thing. . . . Exclusively factual, blind faith does not conform with the dignity of man.[2]

Solovyov certainly endorsed the Platonic view of philosophy as being concerned with *life* and with the Good.[3] He also held that philosophical enquiry must, in the first place, give a satisfactory answer to the question regarding the *goal* of existence.[4] This question would simply not arise if all men lived in a state of complete well-being; but, since it is very clear that they do not live in such a state and that they generally experience considerable dissatisfaction, difficulties and suffering, the question of the goal or purpose of this unsatisfying existence must arise in their minds. It is indeed this, wrote Solovyov, that prompts men to engage in philosophical enquiry.[5]

This emphasis upon the unsatisfactory aspect of man's present, natural state is central to Solovyov's thought (see Chapter 4), and it is brought to the reader's attention whenever he refers to the contrast between 'that which is' (*to, chto est'*) and 'that which ought to be' (*to chto dolzhno byt'*).[6] Solovyov also referred to this contrast as a contrast between 'the actual' and 'the ideal'. His writings on

religion are distinctive in their insistence upon the *gradual* nature of man's attainment of 'the ideal'. He accepted the New Testament symbol of the growth of a tree from its initial seed-form as indicative of this gradual attainment. It is clear that Solovyov was not the only exponent of traditional Christian teachings to focus upon the gradual attainment of Christian goals, but he took particular care to illustrate that feature of the New Testament message. The symbol of the tree's growth also accorded with his view of the Christian Church as an organic, living body (a view he accepted as traditionally Christian, founded directly upon the New Testament). He wrote of Christianity as the *fullest* religious revelation, as the religion that shows men the *way* to the ultimate good or welfare of all. On his account, it is specifically the appearance of the God-man Jesus Christ on earth that makes the spiritual salvation of collective humanity possible.[7]

Solovyov's examination of traditional Christian beliefs is extremely wide-ranging. By means of an extensive analysis of contemporary secular philosophies and of non-Christian beliefs he attempted to *show* firm grounds (theological and philosophical grounds) for accepting Christianity as the religious revelation most truly and fully answering humanity's needs. He defined his own aims as a philosopher-theologian in terms of 'justifying the faith of our fathers' and of 'justifying the Good'. To determine the nature of the Good was, from his point of view, a task of supreme significance. His Introduction to *Justification of the Good* ends with the following affirmation:

> Prior to any metaphysics, we can and must learn what our reason finds as good in human nature, and how it develops and extends this natural good, raising it to the significance of complete moral perfection.[8]

In Part II of this work Solovyov provides his own definition of the *fullness* or completeness of the Good. The Good, in its fullest sense, is expressed in three forms or aspects. He writes:

> Perfection, that is, the fullness of good, or the unity of good and blessedness, is expressed in three aspects:
> 1) absolutely essential, eternally real perfection – in God;
> 2) potential [perfection] – in the human consciousness, containing within itself the absolute plenitude of being as an idea, and in

> the human will, positing it as an ideal and norm for itself; finally 3) in the actual realization of perfection or in the historical process of *perfectibility*.[9] (Solovyov's italics)

It is very noteworthy that in this late work Solovyov continues to accord such great importance to the notion of perfectibility, to the notion that man can consciously, in his mind and his will, accept plenitude of being as the goal (the inherently good goal) to be attained. This restatement of his belief in man's *receptivity* to the idea of perfection is in itself valuable. Furthermore, one deduces from this restatement that Solovyov felt the fundamental content and the direction of his earlier religious writings to be correct. It was his firmly held conviction that man is a 'moral being' receptive to the idea of the Good which led him to see a reformulation of his moral philosophy as necessary,[10] a *refinement*, indeed, of the definitions and reflections contained in *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*. Ernest Radlov was justified in characterising Solovyov as a 'moral philosopher' above all else.[11] A distinctive feature of Solovyov's conception of moral philosophy is this: he was opposed to those philosophers who described moral philosophy (or ethics) as 'incompatible' with the notion of *determinism*. In the Introduction to *Justification of the Good* he writes of man's conscious submission to the idea of the Good as the very *highest* form of 'determinism':

> . . . Ethics is not only compatible with determinism, but even [represents] the highest manifestation of necessity. When a morally highly-developed man in full consciousness submits his will to the idea of the Good, [this idea being] fully apprehended by him and exhaustively reflected upon, then it is already clear to anyone that in this submission to the moral law there is no kind of arbitrary will, that it is completely necessary.[12]

This aspect of Solovyov's religious thought is well elucidated in Radlov's article 'Vladimir Solovyov's Teaching on the Freedom of Will', (*Uchenie Vladimira Solovyova o svobode voli*).[13] Radlov's thesis is that in his treatment of the themes of free will and determinism Solovyov adopts the position taken by Saint Augustine.[14] This position, paradoxical in its assertion that the activity of those who tend towards 'goodness' is *more* circumscribed than the activity of those who tend towards 'evil', is actually tenable and internally consistent. The activity of those who tend towards 'goodness' is

increasingly 'circumscribed' precisely on account of their *avoidance* (their increasing avoidance) of evil; on the other hand, those who tend towards 'evil' do not submit themselves to the moral law (*nravstvenniy zakon*), and their activity is consequently less 'circumscribed' – it is grounded in self-will, which allows the subject to follow, quite arbitrarily, *any* course of activity.

* * *

Solovyov's enquiry concerning morality, as presented in his *Justification of the Good*, begins with an extensive analysis of the human feelings of shame, pity and piety, for he claims that these three feelings provide the basis of man's 'moral nature'. Man's *capacity* to feel shame, pity and piety (and especially shame) is, for Solovyov, clear evidence that he does not accept 'given' reality in a neutral or passive way, but that he actively *responds* to it in a number of appropriate ways. In certain instances he responds to this reality by feeling shame (*styd*): when confronted with purely material, natural being, he responds by asserting – 'I exist as a natural creature, but I am not *only* this; I am conscious of something 'other', I am conscious of another level of existence, and therefore I am not able to remain within the confines of purely material, natural being. To remain as such would be shameful for me'.[15] Solovyov defines pity as the appropriate response of man to his fellow men, and piety (or veneration) as the appropriate response to Divine being.[16] He writes of man's capacity to identify with the sufferings of another being and to feel sympathy with that being (as will be seen below); but he also goes on to define the more specifically *religious* basis of the feeling of pity:

> . . . Pity, which we feel towards a being similar to us, receives a further significance when we see in this being the image and likeness of God. Here we admit [acknowledge] the *absolute* worth [of] this being, we admit that this being is an end (*tsel'*) for God and must all the more be an end for us – that God Himself does not make him *only* a means for Himself, – *we respect this being since God respects him* . . .[17] (Solovyov's italics)

In this same passage the philosopher notes that this 'religious'

dimension of pity does not negate natural pity or replace it; rather, it strengthens and deepens natural pity.

The arguments that Solovyov formulated on the nature of shame, pity and piety were intended to serve as a refinement and general correction of Schopenhauer's moral philosophy. He submits Schopenhauer's account of morality to criticism, for he could not accept that Schopenhauer was correct in relating morality to the one principle of pity or compassion (*Mitleid, sostradanie*).[18] Solovyov describes Schopenhauer's argument as 'rhetorically' elegant and impressive, but as weak from the philosophical point of view. He writes that Schopenhauer has not properly substantiated his claims, namely (a) the claim that a total identification between oneself and another quite separate, alien being is possible; (b) that this identification (which entails an elimination of the barriers between the 'I' and the 'non-I') is the sole basis for one's own motivation.[19] Solovyov criticises his German predecessor for resorting to an abstract metaphysical conception in order to account for something quite adequately explained on the purely empirical level.[20] The characteristic quality of pity, namely that it *binds* men together and creates unity between them, may be seen on the very simple, empirically observable level in the relations between a mother and her children. The abstract, metaphysical conception of the elimination of barriers between the 'I' and the 'non-I' is, in Solovyov's view, superfluous.[21] He defines the true essence of pity in the following terms:

> The true essence of pity or compassion is not at all the immediate identification of oneself with another, but the recognition of the other's own significance – of his right to existence and potential well-being.[22]

As may be seen above, and from a reading of the entire work *Justification of the Good,* Solovyov brings out the specifically religious or *spiritual* significance of shame, pity and piety. In his treatment of these, he is able to incorporate a large number of the ideas that he formulated in earlier works: this is especially true of his treatment of pity (*zhalost'*) as a force that *unifies* mankind. His characterisation of Christianity as the religion eminently concerned with *universal* salvation – and with the qualitative, radical *transfiguration* (*preobrazovanie*) of the entire human community and of material nature itself – allowed Solovyov to return to these fundamental themes in his treatment of *pity*.

Although the religious or spiritual content of *Justification of the Good* is very great, I argue that the initial stages of analysis (on the nature of shame, pity and piety, and also on the nature and status of *conscience, sovest'*) give grounds for concern. Solovyov's purpose in the opening chapters of the work is clear: he wishes to emphasise that in the elaboration of his own moral philosophy he has taken due account of the *actual* nature of man. He describes those philosophies that fail to recognise man's nature as fundamentally unproductive:

> Any moral teaching, whatever its internal persuasiveness or its external authority might be, would remain ineffective and fruitless if it has not found for itself firm bases of support in the actual moral nature of man.[23]

Here, as in other works, he strives to avoid exclusively abstract argument, and he calls his opening chapter 'The Primary Data of Morality' (*Pervichnye dannye nravstvennosti*). He criticised Schopenhauer for the *imprecision* of his terminology,[24] and intended that his own system, founded upon three quite specific human feelings, should yield a more satisfying account of moral principles, values and their application. My main grounds for criticism of Solovyov's approach to moral philosophy are as follows.

The feelings of shame, pity and piety which he defines as 'the primary data of morality', prove to be, for him, more than simply 'primary'. They *actually* assume a greater significance for his system that the 'supporting' function mentioned in the above passage. According to his account, all appropriate and 'moral' actions may be defined by reference to shame, pity and piety. Solovyov amply illustrates the way that man's relations to what is below him, on the same level as him and above him could plausibly be viewed as originating in the human feelings of shame, pity and piety respectively.

The serious defect in Solovyov's explanation of this subject is that *all* aspects of the 'moral' or 'good' life are referred back to, or are measured in relation to, these three human feelings. The first part of *Justification of the Good* provides a rather striking and exceptional instance where Solovyov proceeds *not* from the transcendent realm to the human and phenomenal realm, but from the human and phenomenal to the transcendent realm. This may best be established by citing the philosopher's conception of *conscience* (*sovest'*) at the end of the first chapter. Even in the 'Table of

Contents' conscience appears as 'a modification of shame in a distinct and generalised form' (*Sovest', kak vidoizmenenie styda v otchëtlivoy i obobshchennoy forme*).[25] In the text itself, Solovyov explicitly writes of conscience as being 'only [sic] a development of shame' – '*. . . tak kak sovest' est tol'ko razvitie styda . . .*'[26] This represents an *unacceptable* diminution of the value and, indeed, of the *mystery* of conscience. This is so, *despite* Solovyov's assertion that 'only the voice of conscience' gives moral significance to our relations to our neighbour and to God.[27] In this important passage on shame and conscience, it is conscience that is assigned a *secondary* status. The distinctly human feeling of shame is viewed, here, as 'the one root' of man's moral life.[28] In effect, the phenomenon of human shame is given ultimate moral significance by Solovyov, and conscience is described as *derived* from shame. Here his approach to the whole sphere of morality is very much more that of the empiricist than that of the mystic.

There are numerous features in Solovyov's religious philosophy that do permit one to describe it as 'mystical' in character. He acknowledged mystical apprehension as the foremost means of acquiring knowledge of reality.[29] He especially valued *faith* as a means of gaining certainty about the deepest truths accessible to man.[30] His observations concerning the nature of faith itself and its importance for the 'prophetic' type of man, are firmly founded on Solovyov's personal religious experience. The philosopher's writings on 'sacred corporeality' (*svyataya telesnost'*), especially in *Judaism and the Christian Question* and *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, convey a very deep awareness of the essential unity of the cosmic order and of the penetration of matter by spirit. The *receptivity* of the created order to spiritual influence is indicated by Solovyov in his writings on Sophia and the World Soul (*mirovaya dusha*).[31] It is through his treatment of this theme that Solovyov's name has become especially celebrated in the field of mystical religious thought.

Thomas Masaryk and Lev Shestov came to describe Solovyov's philosophy as flawed by inner contradictions.[32] Masaryk and Shestov argued, quite independently of each other, that in Solovyov's writings free speculative enquiry (epitomised by Kant's critical philosophy, according to Masaryk) conflicted with acceptance of the authority of revealed Scripture. Shestov was aware that Solovyov wished to appeal to reason so as to *support* his religious views, but writes that the actual result of this endeavour was

unfortunate and costly for Solovyov. According to Shestov, reason, in Solovyov's system, adopted the role of ultimate authority; in Shestov's chosen phrase, religious beliefs treated by Solovyov appeared 'in the court of reason' (*pod sudom razuma*). The crisis and tension of the philosopher's very last years sprang from his belated realisation that this constant appeal to reason was both misconceived and fruitless.[33]

The conclusions of Masaryk and Shestov are, broadly speaking, acceptable, although Masaryk's negative assessment of Solvyov's personal character is over-stated.[34] Indeed there were conflicting tendencies within him, and these are also embodied in his philosophical system. He accorded Scripture and revealed religious teachings a high status that philosophers generally do not assign to Scripture, but his whole educational background led him to use reason for the purposes of scholarly analysis. Solovyov's reliance upon *Scripture* is clearly evident in *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, but it may be seen above all in *The History and Future of Theocracy* and *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*. In *The History and Future of Theocracy* he used Books of the Old Testament as reliable sources in his account of the development of the Judaic theocratic ideal. In the analysis he provided, his concern with the *spiritual* destiny of the Jewish people is very clear to see. He accepted many fundamental features of Judaic religious thought as valuable, most notably the Judaic view of the Absolute as Personal, the Jews' messianism (when freed of its *exclusive* emphasis upon *national interests*) and their understanding of 'sacred corporeality'. His desire to defend spiritual values is clearly evident in the philosopher's whole treatment of Judaic spirituality, the Tradition with which he felt such a deep and extraordinary affinity.

Solovyov's exposition of central Christian teachings inevitably draws greatly on Scriptural sources, primarily on the New Testament itself. He was exceptionally familiar with the writings of the Church Fathers, and he frequently cited Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Maxim the Confessor and others. He was able to show the major developments in Christian theological thought and, besides this, he was well informed on the various heretical movements that challenged the Church, especially during the fourth and fifth centuries. He wrote encyclopaedia articles on such matters as Manicheism, and the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies.[35] His expert knowledge of Latin and Greek made many West European and Catholic sources accessible to him (Scripture,

exegesis and critical literature, and the works of mystics such as Jacob Boehme). Solovyov was immensely gifted as a scholar, and this enabled him to pursue more effectively the lines of study that his chosen task of religious-philosophical synthesis required. His early letters to his younger cousin, Katya Romanova,[36] express the confidence he felt in his ability to set out the major lines for a synthesis of traditional Christian teachings and the findings of contemporary philosophy and science.

Although Solovyov's first major work *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* contains lengthy criticism of Hegel for an unwarranted elevation of human reason, it is apparent that Solovyov's own reliance upon (and confidence in) reason is very considerable. The form and style of his early works (1874–80) reveal a mind well trained in the procedures of rational, speculative thought. Solovyov used the forms and categories of rational thought extensively. While this enabled him to make lucid analogies and to explain one field of knowledge by reference to another (often using examples in mathematics and the natural sciences), Solovyov tended towards an over-schematised presentation of his ideas. It is very noteworthy that at the end of his life he still maintained a profound confidence in the worth of rational philosophical thought as a means to attain the truth. In the first chapter of his uncompleted work *Theoretical Philosophy* (*Teoreticheskaya filosofiya*, 1897–99) he writes:

> For the philosopher by calling there is nothing more desirable than truth made meaningful and verified by thought; for this reason he loves the very process of thought as the unique means to attain the desired goal, and he gives himself to it without any outside dangers or fears[37]

I have endeavoured to show, in my examination of Solovyov's opening arguments in *Justification of the Good*, that in following the path of thought (*put' myshleniya*) he was *not* wholly free of problems or dangers. He appeals both to empirical evidence and to logical argument[38] in his attempt to justify the founding of his moral philosophy upon three principles rather than Schopenhauer's one principle of compassion. His attempt to classify the various virtues and human feelings as aspects of the three fundamental 'moral' feelings (shame, pity and piety) poses problems, and would be unacceptable to many. Solovyov proceeds *from* the fact that men experience shame and feel pity and piety, and constructs his moral

system by continual reference to those three human feelings. He does not proceed *from* the transcendent realm. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his arguments concerning conscience.[39] In Solovyov's argument conscience is viewed as a variety of shame (*vidoizmenenie styda*), and in the same passage *all* of man's moral life is said to originate from the feeling of shame.

Solovyov's reliance upon rational thought and discursive argument may be seen in his *Lectures on Godmanhood*, especially in the sixth and seventh lectures, which are devoted to lengthy explanations regarding the Holy Trinity and the relationships of the Three Persons of the Trinity. Solovyov was consistent in his belief that these special relationships are a matter of *logical* proof, as well as being expounded in the teachings of the Church. This belief is expressed in the *Lectures on Godmanhood* and reaffirmed a decade later in *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*.[40] Solovyov accepted the teaching on the nature of the Trinity as a *revealed* teaching,[41] but he also wanted logical proof of that teaching, or, more precisely, he concluded that a *full* acceptance of the existence of God entailed acknowledgement of certain relationships (that is, within the Trinity) that could be established by logical proof. This need or desire for logical and other rational means of proof could not be entirely reconciled with his acceptance of Christian Scripture as 'authoritative'. When we examine his philosophical system, we are obliged to conclude that, for Solovyov, revealed Scripture is not the *sole* basis of 'authority' for ideas, even in the sphere of religion. His concern with speculative reason, a prominent element in the works of his early period, may be detected in the works and unfinished projects of the decade 1890 to 1900. Practical matters *were* important to Solovyov in that last decade of his life (see Chapter 8). However, he wrote that *apart* from practical goals

> . . . there exists in our spirit an independent, purely mental or theoretical need, without whose satisfaction the value of life itself becomes dubious . . .[42]

It is unfortunate, indeed, that Solovyov should have come to the point where lack of satisfaction in the domain of theory appeared really to jeopardise 'the value of life itself'. In order to rectify matters, Solovyov had no need to adopt a 'philosophy of the Irrational' such as the kind later formulated by his critic Shestov. Rather, being already extremely familiar with the Patristic literature

of the Orthodox Tradition – and knowing of the contemplative disciplines developed in that Tradition – Solovyov could have derived considerable benefit from a closer practical contact with Orthodox contemplatives. His acute awareness of the spiritual dangers involved in *exclusive* adherence to 'the contemplative way' equipped him for adherence to a contemplative form of spirituality.[43] The importance of the *Transfiguration* in his conception of central Christian teachings gave him important common ground with practitioners of meditation at Mount Athos.[44] His penetrating insights into the nature of asceticism and his recognition of the need for self-denial (*samootrechenie*)[45] brought Solovyov even closer to them.

Chapters 8 and 9 provide a detailed examination of Solovyov's actual standpoint with regard to contemplation, active spirituality and quietism.

8

Solovyov's Conception of Christian Culture

> . . . Reality in general, and in the most direct way human society, becomes for Plato a subject not for denial and avoidance, but for lively interest. The anomalies of the existing order, its lack of correspondence to ideal requirements, are recognised as before, but the relation of the philosopher to this contradiction changes. He wants practically to *oppose* evil, to *rectify* worldly falsehoods, to *help* [alleviate] worldly sufferings.
> From Vladimir Solovyov's article on Plato for the *Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopaedia*.[1]

> Not to be led astray by the apparent domination of evil, and not to renounce the inapparent good on account of it – [this] is a feat of faith.
> From Vladimir Solovyov's *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*.[2]

In previous chapters I have directed considerable attention to Solovyov's views on Judaic and Christian schemes for a theocratic society. I have also underlined the point that the notion of theocracy became closely bound, in Solovyov's mind, with the attempt to define as fully and lucidly as possible the features of a *spiritual community*.

His writings on the theocratic ideal and on the theocratic government of human society belong, primarily, to the decade of the 1880s, and although they reveal certain enduring qualities of his religious thought, they require consideration in the light of his later works. His works of the decade 1890 to 1900 contain detailed and highly consistent statements on culture and government, and also on the stance of the Christian philosopher, that cannot be overlooked. If, during the 1880s, Solovyov found it difficult to

defend himself in a convincing way against charges that his theocratic schemes were wholly impractical and 'utopian', he addressed himself to very specific criticisms of Russian society in the course of the following decade, and his observations on that theme allow one to build up a composite picture of his conception of authentic Christian culture.

The works examined in the present chapter belong to the years 1890 to 1900, the last decade of the philosopher's life and career. His writings during that period are marked by a high degree of consistency: certain lines of argument reappear in various works during that whole decade, a clear measure of the importance he attached to their clarification and solution.

I cannot pretend to provide a definitive account of Solovyov's conception of Christian culture; the material in this chapter allows me simply to work *towards* an understanding of it. The two works I examine are *The Drama of Plato's Life*, a fifty-page study written in 1898, and a lecture which the philosopher delivered in 1891[3] entitled *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*. Both works contain material that fully testifies to Solovyov's abiding concern with Christian religious values and with their implementation in the life and organisation of the social community. These works also reveal part of his methodological approach, for, in expounding his own system, he investigated a wide range of other religious and philosophical teachings. He examined the framework of theological beliefs and premises of particular religions, and also their impact (whether favourable or detrimental) on the societies and nations that adopted them. He employed theological and cultural-cum-historical criteria in his evaluation of a religious system, and these two works are noteworthy examples of this fundamentally *comparative* approach.

Solovyov returned again and again to the question of what constitutes a genuinely Christian society, approaching that question from different points of departure. In the two works considered here, Solovyov reflects on the weaknesses in Ancient Greek society of Plato's time and in Byzantine society respectively. What he writes serves as the basis for an increasingly refined understanding of the features that distinguish a genuinely Christian society. The pre-Christian community of Athens provided Solovyov with one kind of contrast, while, according to him, the *nominally* Christian community of Byzantium was also to be contrasted with the true Christian social ideal.

In *The Drama of Plato's Life* Solovyov's account of his subject's life and preoccupations focuses on the fundamental crisis of faith suffered by the young Plato when he witnessed the undeserved punishment and execution of Socrates. It was Socrates's consistent enquiries into the nature of justice that had animated the young men of the Athenian community and prompted them to explore philosophy; and it was his evident integrity and his seriousness of purpose that in time provoked the hostility of the community at large, as he exposed to view the very poverty of their commonly held beliefs and also their lack of concern for pursuing 'the good life'. As his book shows, Solovyov was keenly aware of the tragedy (indeed, the irony also) of this state of affairs, namely, of the unpalatable fact that the best society of the pre-Christian age (the best in Solovyov's account of world history up to that point) – universally hailed for its achievements in government, in mathematics and the sciences, the arts and in other fields – had proved unable to contain and tolerate a man devoted to the notions of truth and justice.[4] Solovyov maintains it was awareness of this tragic weakness in Greek society that induced a deep crisis of faith in Plato, so that he subsequently *denied* the worth of a society which destroys a just man (*pravednik*), and that he (Plato) increasingly affirmed the existence of another, ideal world where truth lives and remains intact. Solovyov stresses that the tragedy confronting Plato was significantly deeper than the 'personal' tragedy of Hamlet. Plato's question was not merely a personal 'To be or not to be?', but 'Is there or is there not to be truth in this world?'.[5]

On Solovyov's account, Plato constructed an idealist philosophy that was to exercise a profound influence on the minds and imagination of men, but a philosophy that – when compared with Christian thought – was flawed by an extreme, virtually irresolvable dualism, a complete severance of the realms of the ideal and the phenomenal. Plato was driven to this extreme (and ultimately untenable) view of the separated ideal and phenomenal worlds, maintains Solovyov, initially on account of his experience in the phenomenal world, that is, his experience of witnessing the Athenians' proven disregard for justice when they sentenced to death Socrates, his enlightened teacher.

Commentators on the life and work of Solovyov attribute the writing of *The Drama of Plato's Life* to two factors: in the first place, to a sense of personal, and to some extent spiritual, affinity that Solovyov felt with the Greek philosopher; in the second place, to a

sense of disillusion, and at times world-weariness, which Solovyov appeared to experience in the last decade of his life, when he considered society's resistance to Christian teaching and to the general notion of improvement or perfectibility, the worth and importance of which he had stressed throughout his own writings. Janko Lavrin writes:

> In trying to explain the character and even the sequence of Plato's works by means of the inner drama of Plato's disappointment, he [Solovyov] incidentally clarified and overcame his own pessimistic leanings.[6]

Although these two aspects of *The Drama of Plato's Life* are significant – namely, the affinity that Solovyov felt with Plato, and the personal disillusion he was able to articulate in the process of treating Plato's idealism – I argue, here, that this late work reflects, first and foremost, his lasting concern with spiritual *values*.

As may be judged from a reading of Solovyov's early correspondence,[7] he conceived his own life's task to be the transmission of Christian truths in a form accessible to a wide section of the educated Orthodox laity, whose active recommitment to Christian faith and practice he most earnestly sought to bring about.

Solovyov's letters quite explicitly reflect his search for the most efficacious *means* to reanimate his prospective readers' concern for the spiritual dimension of their lives.[8] A part of his endeavour to impress upon Christian-educated, but agnostic, Russians the validity and direct import of Christian teaching to them consisted in an extensive examination of values. He undertook to establish, both from the philosophical and the theological points of view, that the criteria for action and for moral choices which Christianity provides are demonstrably more reliable and well-founded than alternative, non-Christian sets of criteria.

Solovyov's own preoccupation with *values* appears to have been animated particularly by reflection upon the kind of questions which Socrates brought to prominence – concerning virtues, justice and the Good – and also by reflection upon the subsequent career of Plato, his outstanding pupil. The Russian philosopher was acutely conscious of the strengths and the attraction of Platonic idealism, and he very readily acknowledged its enduring contribution to human thought and creativity. However, he felt able to show that

unqualified assent to Plato's views is not legitimate: even in terms of his own premises, Plato could be faulted. In the second place, Solovyov found his idealist philosophy deficient when compared to the Christian account of the cosmic order. Briefly, Solovyov's criticisms are these:

1. Plato *betrayed* the spirit of Socratic teaching, the aims and method of which had elicited such a positive and creative response from him in the initial stage of his career. On Solovyov's account,[9] Plato – in the elaboration of his political philosophy – arrived at a *denial* of individuals' freedom to determine questions of religion and social morality independently of the 'authority' of the City. This autonomy and right of free enquiry were the very things which Socrates, his teacher, sought to secure for the citizens of the Athenian City-State, and it is clear from the nature of Plato's first writings that initially he wholly accepted and endorsed the goal pursued by Socrates. Particularly significant and ironic for Solovyov was the consideration that Plato's 'betrayal' of Socratic principles arose precisely from an attempt to determine the optimum arrangement of men's social relations.[10]
2. In his comparative evaluation of Platonism and Christian thought, Solovyov concludes that the Christian account of the cosmic order is more satisfactory and internally consistent, for it avoids the problems posed by adherence to Plato's strictly dualistic conception of the universe as ideal and phenomenal.[11]

Solovyov's reflections on the career of Plato provide his educated readers with a stimulating and thought-provoking reappraisal of a familiar figure, and one may suppose that this was a significant part of his didactic aim. (He was, also, sufficiently well qualified to address his findings to the specialist in this field, having collaborated with his younger brother Mikhail Sergeyevich Solovyov in the translation of certain Platonic dialogues into Russian).[12]

A problem that has faced successive generations of philosophers is the problem of establishing whether their philosophical labours entitle, or indeed require, them to renounce the world of human affairs. One of the most enduring and wide-spread views regarding the philosopher is that he is a person distinguished from others by his preoccupation with an order of perceptions that is worthy of man's highest faculties, and by his resistance to transient, purely

pleasurable sensations which other men are, generally speaking, unable or unwilling to forego. According to this viewpoint, the philosopher's direct involvement in the normal course of human affairs and activities would make him subject to a variety of distractions, would reduce his capacity for creative, speculative thought, and would tie him too firmly to the phenomenal, time-bound and imperfect world in which men live. In more explicitly religious expressions of that same viewpoint, the philosopher involved in human affairs is said to be subject not merely to distractions, but also to sin, evil and various forms of suffering. It was held, then, that in order to preserve his integrity and his 'gift', the philosopher had to distance himself from 'the world'. A wide range of idealist, ascetical and other schools subscribed to this view of the philosopher, and in many instances they advocated a very uncompromising *renunciation* of worldly affairs. Many students of nineteenth-century Russian intellectual and religious thought associate Vladimir Solovyov's name too readily with these 'world-renouncing' schools of idealist philosophy and asceticism, and tend to overlook the evidence which modifies or even contradicts that aspect of his thought.

The Drama of Plato's Life and Solovyov's article on Plato for the *Brockhaus–Ephron Encyclopaedia*[13] reflect his awareness of a tension in Plato's life between his commitment to contemplation of the world of ideal forms and, on the other hand, his awakening concern with activity in the political sphere.[14] Solovyov gives prominent significance to the transition in Plato's life from renunciation of worldly concerns to direct involvement in the activities of men. The pessimistic strain in the Greek philosopher's thought which first allowed him to scorn the realm of human affairs gave way to an earnest and active desire for reform. Both the renunciation and, in *its* turn, the concern with active reform of human society, accorded with Plato's understanding of the philosopher's task.

Solovyov's own writings on Platonism, Christianity and on religion generally, show him to have been conscious of the demands made on man by the choice and pursuit of the contemplative life (when it entails renouncing 'the world') and the active life respectively. While he understood that in practice contemplation (philosophical or religious) and action could appear as two mutually exclusive types of human endeavour,[15] he did not rest content with a characterisation of contemplation and action as absolutely opposed or necessarily exclusive of one another. Solovyov took their complementarity to be evidence of the

richness of the Christian revelation, where the worth both of contemplative and of active spirituality is fully affirmed.[16]

There are many strands in Solovyov's thought that coincide in their affirmation of the need for practical, reforming activity in the world of human affairs. His writings on *spiritualisation* and *transfiguration*, on the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth, on Church unity, on the pernicious effects of nationalism – all these constitute different expressions of the notion that the discrepancy between *ideal norms* ('that which ought to be') and *actual conditions* of life ('that which is') must be abolished. More precisely, Solovyov endeavoured to show that the attainment of this goal should rightly be a matter for unanimous agreement, and that men should envisage the course of their historical development as leading specifically to that goal. Indeed, at the centre of Solovyov's religious philosophy lies the conviction that men's *collective morality* is to be judged in terms of their enhancement or hindrance of progress towards that goal.[17]

Solovyov's observations on the life of Plato lead one to see that while he deplored the betrayal of Socratic principles entailed in the authoritarian scheme of state rule which emerged in the later writings,[18] he approved of the *aspiration* to reform society. And, furthermore, Solovyov conceived of active involvement in fundamental social reform as being entirely appropriate to the philosopher's calling.

In his encyclopaedia article on Plato, Solovyov writes of the transition in the Greek philosopher's standpoint, the transition from renunciation to involvement in worldly affairs. The following passage is especially noteworthy and important, because, in addition to commenting on Plato's stance, it ends with a description of the tasks or goals that the philosopher in general should aspire to work for:

> Reality in general, and in the most direct way human society, becomes for Plato a subject not for denial and avoidance, but for lively interest. The anomalies of the existing order, its lack of correspondence to ideal requirements, are recognised as before, but the relation of the philosopher to this contradiction changes. He wants practically to *oppose* evil, to *rectify* worldly falsehoods, to *help* [alleviate] worldly sufferings.[19] (Solovyov's italics)

The final sentence, here, is possibly the most concise definition of Solovyov's own ideal. His seriousness of purpose was very

apparent to his contemporaries, and his life and writings amply show that he, like his eminent predecessor, wanted 'to oppose evil, rectify worldly falsehoods, to help [alleviate] worldly sufferings'.

In connection with this aspect of Solovyov's life and work, a friend, Fyodor Lvovich Sollogub (1848–1890), attempted a semi-humorous literary portrayal in verse entitled *Solovyov in Thebaïd (Solovyov v Fivaide)*,[20] where the accent is very plainly on showing the youthful philosopher as an inspired champion of the Good. Though never completed nor published separately, the existing text of this play is provided in the three-volume work by S. M. Luk'yanov *About Vl. S. Solovyov in His Young Years (O Vl. S. Solovyove v ego molodye gody)*.[21] Here is a typical extract, taken from the opening section, where Satan is speaking:

> . . . A new enemy has appeared . . . the courageous Solovyov . . .
> Shaking the root of evil – [in this] he has already had success,
> Aiming at me with the arrow of knowledge and the javelin of faith,
> He endeavours to sweep my throne off the face of the earth.[22]

Solovyov's personal conduct and life-style were judged by numerous contemporaries to be exemplary and even saintly, though negative views of him are also recorded. It is significant, however, that even convinced critics of Solovyov's approach to religious philosophy frequently modified their attacks with a generous acknowledgement of his aspirations. The volatile writer and polemicist Vasiliy Rozanov, who sometimes resorted to bitter attacks on Solovyov's ideas and personal character, has recorded one strikingly generous assessment of his personal spiritual life and his integrity:

> In Solovyov, in the middle of the seventies, emerged a great man, apparent to all, in whom the personal relationship to God was exceptionally strong. In the spirituality of Solovyov there was also this marvellous and firm aspect, [namely] that it was in no way contrived, it did not constitute [simply] a part of his scholarly studies or the fruit of his philosophical reflections: at the same time it was not a remnant of childhood faith. This was the serious condition of a serious man, authentic, controlled; it was, precisely, a form of breathing for his conscience (*bylo, imenno, formoy dykhaniya ego sovesti*).[23]

In the present chapter I have sought to show how Solovyov responded to the problem that has traditionally faced philosophers: namely, the satisfactory resolution of the question whether their work demands involvement in the normal course of human affairs or an uncompromising renunciation of them. *The Drama of Plato's Life* and Solovyov's encyclopaedia article on Plato are, in effect, short, but lucid essays that present the salient arguments for and against renunciation. Plato's biography serves as a focus for Solovyov's resolution of this general question, and on the basis of his evidence he concluded that the aspiration to improve society, and active involvement in human affairs, are entirely appropriate to the philosopher's calling.

Solovyov was personally concerned with a variety of causes and reforming campaigns, in some of which he played a prominent part. His contribution to the debate on the abolition of capital punishment and his advocacy of a more liberal interpretation of law are noteworthy, and his writings on these questions fill more than seventy pages in his Collected Works.[24] He was similarly active in criticising state and Church censorship,[25] and his support for the Jews against the officially condoned anti-Semitic campaigns and pogroms is one of the most widely known facts of his biography. Here he enlisted the support of Lev Tolstoy,[26] and he also produced a petition headed by Tolstoy's name when he urged the Tsarist government to allocate sufficient financial resources for the relief of the 1891 famine victims in Southern Russia. Indeed, his rigorous application of philosophical principles to contemporary problems confronting man, his informed and compassionate stance, and his activism in the field of social reform, call to mind recent figures of the twentieth century who have used philosophical or religious criteria as a reliable guide to human action: Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Martin Luther King, Aldous Huxley (whose book *Ends and Means* merits special attention in this context) and Hannah Arendt.

As has been noted earlier, Solovyov was very mindful of the distinction between *that which is* and *that which ought to be*. The energy and sense of dedication with which he turned to active campaigning for social and ecclesiastical reform derive, to an important extent, from this consciousness of the discrepancy between the *actual* imperfect state of humanity and its potential *ideal* state. Consciousness of this discrepancy is an important theme in the second of Solovyov's *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*.[27] There he stresses that the Christian ideal of universal

harmony still remains a task to be accomplished in the future; by contrast, our general tendency to order politics, economics, international relations, even art and learning, upon the basis of self-interest, competition, mutual hostility and struggle, gives rise to oppression and violence, the oppression and violence that we experience directly in our *actual, present* life. This, asserts the philosopher, is our factual condition, our reality. He continues with the following affirmation:

> . . . But the merit and the whole significance of such people as Dostoevsky reside precisely in that they do not bow down before the force of fact and they do not serve that force. Set against this crude force of 'that which exists', they possess the spiritual force of faith in truth and goodness – in 'that which ought to exist'.[28]

Solovyov appears to be prompted as much by *faith* as by the conviction that the Gospels preach an *active love* (*deyatel'naya lyubov'*). He continues to value the notion of *perfectibility*, and maintains his faith in the ultimate victory and assertion of truth. His poem 'If desires take flight . . . ' (*Esli zhelaniya begut . . .*), composed during the 1890s, questions the worth of life and of eternity 'if desires take flight' and if words and promises prove deceptive, but the poem ends by viewing life as 'a feat' (*podvig*) and by affirming that 'living truth is radiant with eternity', shining forth even in decayed coffins.[29] This allusion to resurrection and this positive outlook accord well with an earlier affirmation of faith that we find in the second speech in memory of Dostoevsky:

> Not to be led astray by the apparent domination of evil, and not to renounce the inapparent good on account of it – [this] is a feat of faith.[30]

* * *

Vladimir Solovyov's *loss of confidence* in the readiness of Russians who professed the Christian faith to work actively for the betterment of society and for justice became apparent to the public when, on 19 October 1891, after a long, officially imposed absence from the lecturer's platform, he read a paper at a session of the

Moscow Psychological Society entitled *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview* (*Ob upadke srednevekovogo mirosozertsaniya*).[31] The argument advanced in that lecture, the text and more or less distorted verbal reports of which reached wide circles of the public not present on this occasion, elicited an exceedingly hostile response in the press. The official authorities demanded assurances from the speaker that he had not personally circulated the text of his paper, nor encouraged others to do so on his behalf. Official action against Solovyov for this expression of his views was a distinct possibility. The response of certain members of the public is noteworthy. On 4 November A. A. Kireyev wrote to the editor of '*Moskovskie vedomosti*' (Petrovsky), saying that he wished Solovyov no personal harm, 'but it would be very undesirable if his theories remained unpunished'.[32] The historian V. O. Klyuchevsky wrote dismissively of an attempt by Solovyov to link Christian principles to Socialism, and called it 'the product of unclear, feverish thought and of a rhetorical play on words' (*napolovinu pripadok neyasnoy i vospalënnoy mysli, napolovinu ritoricheskaya igra slovami*).[33]

This new notoriety was due to the argument put forward by Solovyov. The considerable scandal which ensued is perhaps the best indication that the speaker had been all too accurate in his observations on an evidently sensitive subject.[34]

Solovyov introduced his paper by pointing out that to equate the mediaeval worldview with Christianity is misguided because, contrary to the popular view, these are actually diametrically opposed to each other (*mezhdu nimi est' pryamaya protivopolozhnost'*).[35] His argument proceeds as follows:

> From this very [opposition] it becomes clear that the causes of the decline of 'the mediaeval worldview' are contained not in Christianity, but in the distortion of it, and it emerges that for authentic Christianity this decline is in no way fearful.[36]

The philosopher's certainty regarding the ultimate inviolability of Christian truth was at this point in his career (Solovyov was aged thirty-eight) no less strong than at the beginning of the 1870s. If pressed either by Alexander III or the State Procurator to find evidence that Solovyov had maligned the religion of the Russian state, officials would have searched in vain. Five years previously, in 1886, in response to charges of unorthodoxy in religious matters

that were published in the journal *'Blagovest'* and elsewhere, Solovyov wrote an explicit profession of his belief in the rites of the Orthodox Church:

> I remain and hope always to remain a member of the Orthodox Church, not only formally but actually, in no way invalidating my confession of faith, and fulfilling all the religious duties associated with it.[37]

In his 1891 lecture Solovyov asserted that the regeneration of humanity, which is the essence of true Christianity, is a complex and long process, and has therefore rightly been compared, in the Gospels, to the growth of a tree. But Christian regeneration is not confined to a natural process:

> The Christian regeneration of humanity cannot be just a natural process, cannot be achieved by itself, by means of unconscious movements and changes (*putëm bessoznatel'nykh dvizheniy i peremen*).[38] Humanity itself must certainly participate in it, employing its own forces and awareness.[39]

Solovyov actually takes the active cooperation of humanity in the spiritual transformation of earthly existence to be an essential factor which sets Christianity above the other religious revelations, notably above Islām.[40]

According to Christian teaching, then, the regeneration of humanity and all material being involves God and man in its realization. Reiterating the view which he held throughout his life, Solovyov insisted that the process cannot take place if man is passive, and it cannot be *imposed* as an external fact or condition that man is obliged to accept as 'given'.[41] Even the Apostles, who were so very close to Christ that we might expect them to have grasped this aspect of His teaching, initially thought in terms of a regeneration immediately established, a condition which man was simply called to accept as 'given fact'.[42] This attitude still prevailed in the early Christian communities, for whom the real possibility of persecution and the expectation of an imminent end to the world contributed to such an interpretation of the Christian message.[43]

Solovyov observes that Christian believers found themselves in a distinctly different situation when their faith was accepted as the official religion of the Byzantine state and when, eventually,

non-conformity was punishable. This development was undesirable in that the citizens of Byzantium, in many cases, professed the official state religion, Christianity, so as to avoid hardship and persecution. The result achieved by the institutionalising of the Christian faith was to reduce critically the genuine allegiance to that faith.[44]

Solovyov's critical observations regarding the nominally Christian society of Byzantium are many: they re-emerge, in fuller form, in a forty-page essay under the title *Byzantinism and Russia* (*Vizantizm i Rossiya*) written in 1896, which makes the historical connection with Russia explicit.[45] But, already in 1891, the audience attending Solovyov's lecture, and then the wider public who read the hostile press reports, could not doubt that the philosopher deplored the nominal conformity to a Christian code of behaviour and values and the maintaining of an attitude that *actually* belied those values. Even before he referred to any comparison with contemporary Russia, the intended parallel between the Byzantine and the Russian states must have been extremely hard to overlook.

Solovyov's thesis is that the sizeable majority in Byzantine society, who paid only nominal allegiance to the officially established faith (because impelled by fear of punishment), had little interest or cause to order their society on truly Christian bases.[46] This marked lack of concern for reform, on the part of the majority, was aggravated by two other elements in society:

(a) by the Church leaders and hierarchy who, according to Solovyov, neglected this social side of their responsibilities or else, through a very deficient understanding of their own faith, did not deem Christian values to be applicable to the ordering of men's general social relations;[47]
(b) by those sincere believers who recognised that dogma alone could not save men, but who mistakenly considered that their task was to achieve personal salvation and wholly to abandon worldly concerns. This false and absolute separation of 'the spiritual' from 'the worldly',[48] on the part of the genuinely committed believers, had very detrimental effects on the secular society which they forsook; that society then lacked sufficient numbers of leaders with integrity who might discern men's needs (material needs and spiritual ones) and work to provide them.[49]

It is noteworthy that in Solovyov's view the majority of Christian ascetics of the Byzantine era failed to fulfil their duty towards society:

> With the single exception of St. John Chrysostom, the preaching of the Eastern [Orthodox] ascetics did not envisage any Christian transformations of the social order.[50]

The thesis developed by Solovyov in *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview* does not – until we reach its final section – present us with ideas substantially different from those expressed in the later essay *Byzantinism and Russia* (1896). The second of these is a less widely known work, but it also is extremely representative of its author's thought and method of argument. Indeed, here, in *Byzantinism and Russia*, Solovyov could set down a fuller account of the historical circumstances surrounding the decline of Byzantium, and he could clearly establish the parallel with nineteenth-century Russia, both of which tasks were rather unsuited to the limited form of a lecture. To show that Solovyov's subject matter and major preoccupations in 1896 were very close to those of 1891, one may cite these excerpts from *Byzantinism and Russia*:

> Byzantium . . . considered itself saved by the fact that it covered up its pagan life with a cloak of Christian dogma and religious rites – and it perished.[51]
>
> Byzantium perished not, of course, because it was imperfect, but because it did not wish to perfect itself.[52]

The same moral tone of the author is evident here as in the 1891 lecture and in the poem 'Panmongolism' (1894). Other recurring elements are these:

(a) Solovyov's attack on nominal Christianity that shrouds a real contempt for the actual values enshrined in the Gospels;
(b) reference to the Byzantines' lack of readiness to reform their way of life;
(c) the characteristically Christian notion of *perfectibility is* again applied to the collective, not solely to the individual.[53]

An impassioned attack on nominal Christianity in contemporary twentieth-century society may be found in Lev Tolstoy's short work

The Law of Violence and the Law of Love (*Zakon nasiliya i zakon lyubvi*, 1908):

> This phenomenon has occurred several times in the history of humanity; but never, I believe, has the discord between the mode of life of our societies and the religious ideals they have formally adopted been so great; they continue to live a life which is in effect pagan.
>
> In my opinion, this disagreement is so marked because the Christian view of life at the moment of its formation went far beyond the moral and intellectual level of the peoples who acknowledged it at that time. This is why the code of conduct which it recommended was too greatly opposed not only to the habits of individual people but to the whole social organisation of pagans, who had become Christian in name only.[54]

It is very noteworthy that Tolstoy and Solovyov, who disagreed so profoundly about the most central religious questions,[55] should have viewed nominal Christianity in such similar terms.

Briefly summarising the content of the 1891 lecture, one can say that Solovyov presented his audience with an account of the decline in Christian belief that so adversely affected Byzantine society, and he identified those elements (Church hierarchy and ascetic hermits) whose unduly narrow interpretation of the fundamental Christian teachings had, in his view, contributed to this erosion of belief on the popular level. It is now necessary to consider the conclusion of Solovyov's argument, the conclusion upon which the fame of the lecture actually rests. In the closing section of the lecture he asked who or which group in society it was that kept the Christian 'spirit' alive and thus compensated for the negligence of the purely nominal believers.[56] Indeed, Solovyov attracted much animosity when he asked his audience to surmise that it may be the non-believers who have played the greater role, over the centuries, in introducing enlightened and far-reaching social reforms. Furthermore, commented Solovyov, the fact that these reformers, these initiators of true progress, do not consider themselves to be Christians should not obscure their actual achievement in adhering to the Christian spirit.[57] Citing the efforts to abolish torture, persecution of heretics and feudal forms of slavery, Solovyov viewed it as entirely reasonable to accept that those who are not Christian but aspire to improve society can really achieve Christian

goals. It is plain to understand how the expression of this viewpoint gave rise to feelings of self-reproach, vulnerability and shaken confidence, at least among those who recognised that, for all their professions of faith, they had – conspicuously – 'sinned' by their omission to act. Even if Solovyov never deliberately aimed to fulfil such a function, he was eminently well qualified to act as contemporary Russian society's 'sore conscience'. In his capacity as scholar and educator, he successfully induced large numbers of people to attempt a serious revaluation of the framework of traditional Christian thought. In this enterprise of revaluation his own writings form a major contribution that has itself generated a literature of informed discussion and commentary. However, the Tsarist government and some elements of the public treated him warily, knowing how much importance and worth he assigned to Christian moral precepts as a decisive means of transforming the very structure of society, *not* on the common lines of exclusive class or national interests, but according to an ideal of unanimity generally cast as 'utopian'. He came to be viewed as an isolated figure, the speaker of distinctly uncomfortable truths, rootless, and without an easily identifiable following either in the scholarly world or beyond it.

The present chapter concentrates on an examination of central ideas in *The Drama of Plato's Life* and *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview* because both these works merit treatment in any serious evaluation of Solovyov's conception of Christian culture. A close reading of these works enables one to discern the *comparative method* employed by Solovyov as he continually sought to delineate the character of that culture, to restate and simultaneously to refine definitions which might allow his readers to appreciate the intrinsic strengths of their heritage, 'the faith of [their] fathers'.[58]

On the basis of actual chronological order, discussion of the 1891 lecture should precede analysis of *The Drama of Plato's Life* written in 1898. The advantage to be had from treating these works in reverse order is this: one can see Solovyov apply his comparative method to a non-Christian (pre-Christian) culture. Then – as he approaches what he held to be the authentic Christian 'norm' the task of comparison becomes, in a sense, more exacting – one sees him present the cultural and historical circumstances of the 'falsely' Christian society, the debased society of the 'false Christians' (the *'lzhekhristiane'*). For Solovyov the model of a falsely conceived Christian theocracy was invariably Byzantium. Writing in 1884, in

his *Judaism and the Christian Question* (*Evreystvo i khristianskiy vopros*),[59] he criticised the nominally Christian Byzantine rulers and clergy, and he compared their *actual* views unfavourably with those of the misguided, but morally superior Muslims.[60] In Solovyov's view, the Byzantine Empire manifestly deserved to 'fall', and he endeavoured to show that its loss of inner vitality – due to the alleged spiritual complacency and reliance upon ritual of the professed believers – was in effect too devastating to allow the Empire's continued survival, even on a rudimentary level.

The Drama of Plato's Life and *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview* provide Solovyov's reflections on the culture and values of Ancient Greece and Byzantium respectively. Solovyov used his materials for the purpose of an instructive comparison with the framework of values he himself considered to be authentically 'Christian', that is, with the code of values founded upon the revealed teaching of Jesus Christ, presented in the New Testament. The *method* of comparison relies much upon history (and, in the second of these works, upon Church history also). When we come to consider their *content*, we find that these works share one important element in common: each work contains an explicit *critique* of the attempt to renounce the secular sphere of life and separate it in some absolute way from spiritual aspirations and concerns. This wish to separate the two spheres and to discount entirely the worth of the secular sphere constituted the central weakness of Plato's idealist philosophy and of the 'mediaeval worldview' – such is Solovyov's argument. He referred to this tendency or attempt at separation as 'false spirituality' (*lozhniy spiritualizm*),[61] and he made clear the direct opposition between this and the very basis of Christianity:

> In this . . . one-sided spirituality the 'mediaeval worldview' came into direct opposition with the very basis of Christianity.[62]

* * *

During the 1890s Solovyov was extremely preoccupied with the state of Russian society. I have already enumerated some of the aspects of Russian life that he especially deplored: censorship, nationalism in its various forms, and anti-Semitism. The existence of censorship in religious and political matters obviously impeded

the solution of problems and the correction of misunderstandings. However, Solovyov believed that, in the final analysis, a greater obstacle to the attainment of fundamental Christian goals was *complacency*. Both in the poem 'Panmongolism' and in the essay *'Byzantinism and Russia'*, written in the years 1894 and 1896 respectively, Solovyov suggested that the ideal of Moscow as the Third Rome was increasingly remote and deceptive – an ideal that only Russia's flatterers wish to perpetuate. As the decade unfolded, the philosopher's misgivings about the various unsatisfactory features of contemporary life in Russia became greatly accentuated by his belief that the *complacency* of his compatriots was the most insidious force of all. The very fact that he came to equate Russia with 'fallen' defeated Byzantium must strike one as a profound and difficult admission for him to make, regarding the religious faith of the Russian people. Solovyov had, during the previous decade, envisaged an exceptionally glorious role for Russia as the guardian of authentic Christian faith, a point confirmed by two scholars, Prince Evgeniy Trubetskoy and Dmitry Stremoukhov. The latter of these, Stremoukhov, author of an illuminating study entitled *Vladimir Soloviev et son Oeuvre Messianique* (1935) observes how *closely* this conception of Russia's glorious future was bound with *criticism* of its present conditions:

> Basically, never did the Slavophiles, even in their most extreme views, predict that Russia would have a role of greatness [and] historical significance similar to the one that Solovyov promised for it. But the fulfilment of this glorious future is based on a severe criticism of actual conditions in Russia . . .[63]

When we look at the figure of Solovyov during the 1890s and at the sequence of his critical statements about Russia, which accord so entirely with the motif of *retribution* in the poem 'Panmongolism', it becomes possible to appreciate the perceptive insight of Vasiliy Rozanov as he wrote:

> If anyone increasingly lacked reasons to "live happily in Russia", then this was Solovyov.[64]

9

A Vision of Conflict and Decline

In Chapter 8 I examined the central themes in two of Vladimir Solovyov's later works, and that analysis was intended to help characterise his historically-based *comparative method* for evaluating non-Christian, nominally Christian and actually Christian societies respectively. In *The Drama of Plato's Life* and *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview* Solovyov delineated certain features of the non-Christian society (in this case, pre-Christian) and of the nominally Christian society; then, by stressing the shortcomings of their organisation of human affairs, Solovyov hoped to direct his readers towards an increasingly fine appreciation of the society that most adequately exemplifies the Christian social ideal. In other words, Solovyov employed a *negative process of elimination and contrast* to help him clarify the salient features of an authentically Christian society or culture.

At the same time Solovyov reflected upon the criteria that define the philosopher's stance in these matters. The options confronting the philosopher are these: renunciation of worldly and social concerns in the name of a more complete and effective contemplation of the ideal and, on the other hand, an active interest and participation in the qualitative improvement of the imperfect, existing social order so as to reduce, as far as possible, the discrepancy between the existing order and the ideal paradigm. Through his portrayal of Plato Solovyov showed that the philosopher's commitment to one or other option is not fixed once and for all, that – as in the case of Plato himself – the philosopher may at different stages in his career deem either renunciation or participation to be his proper response. The *consistency* of Solovyov's views on this matter is noteworthy, especially as reflected in his essays and lectures of the decade 1890 to 1900. To that last period of his life belong the following inter-related works: *China and Europe* (*Kitay i Evropa*), 1890; *On the Decline of the*

Mediaeval Worldview (*Ob upadke srednevekovogo mirosozertsaniya*), 1891; the poem 'Panmongolism', 1894; *Byzantinism and Russia* (*Vizantizm i Rossiya*), 1986; *Justification of the Good* (*Opravdanieya dobra*), 1897; *The Drama of Plato's Life* (*Zhiznennaya Drama Platona*), 1898; and *Three Conversations* (*Tri razgovora*), 1899–1900, a work that presents in more widely accessible dialogue form many of the issues under discussion in the earlier works.

The emphasis that Solovyov placed upon the notion of *perfectibility* and upon its application to all of men's relations and social organisation is evident throughout his writings, in the late as well as the early period. In Solovyov's terms, the notion of perfectibility is, and should be, of paramount importance to the philosopher. One might say that the line of enquiry pursued by the pre-Christian philosopher Socrates was eminently well conceived, concentrating, as it does, on the virtues, and Solovyov concedes that it evoked a creative response in successive generations of philosophers and other men. He went on to say that, with the inauguration of the Christian teaching presented in the New Testament, men are yet better equipped than Socrates to resolve the central recurring problems of philosophy and the related questions of value.

Solovyov's 1891 lecture and the biographical study of Plato coincide in providing a *critique* of the attempt to separate the ideal and the existing spheres in an absolute way and of the philosopher's attempt to devote his attention exclusively to the ideal sphere. As the Russian philosopher demonstrated through personal example, there are many practical matters whose solution could be assisted by the philosopher's attention to polemical writing and by his advocacy of social, legal and other reforms. In this context it would be appropriate to cite the articles Solovyov wrote between 1883 and 1891 with the collective title *The National Question in Russia* (*Natsional'niy vopros v Rossii*), for in these articles he examined the grounds of the long-lasting dispute between the Westernisers and Slavophiles. Conscious though he was of Russia's history and of its possible lessons regarding the country's future destiny as a guardian of Christian truth, Solovyov regretted that concern for the nation's past and for traditionally 'Russian' virtues should have led to any extremism, and he denounced the growing nationalism of the later generation of Slavophiles, whose writings and activities harmed prospects of any reconciliation between the hostile camps.

In the present chapter it is necessary to extend the examination of the historical comparative *method* employed by Solovyov in his survey of the world's influential religious and philosophical teachings. I have already alluded to the historical parallel drawn by him between Byzantium in the years immediately prior to its fall and contemporary Russia (Chapter 8). From a reading of the poem 'Panmongolism' it becomes clear that the motif of *retribution*[1] was at the very basis of this historical–cultural parallel. The poet already *envisages* the destruction of Russia, cultural and physical: '. . . And the Third Rome lies in ashes'.[2] It can even be argued, on the basis of the poem's first stanza, that Solovyov had reached the point of *resignation* in the face of God's wish to punish complacent and faithless Russia:

'Panmongolism'. Although the name is savage,
Its sound is sweet to me,
As if it were filled with the portent
Of a great Divine destiny.[3]

The apparent explanation for this resignation is given in the lines 'We do not want to learn From the fate of fallen Byzantium . . .'[4]

The complexities involved in correctly interpreting the ambiguous attitude of the poet to his subject may, to a quite considerable extent, be clarified by a detailed analysis of his essay *China and Europe*.[5]

This essay, whose very title indicates a comparative study of some kind, provides us with a body of historical information (and the inferences drawn by its author) that allows one to discern how it was that Solovyov arrived at the views expressed in poetic form in 'Panmongolism'. *China and Europe* raises certain questions about the validity of Solovyov's method of procedure that are not applicable in the context of either *The Drama of Plato's Life* or *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*. This chapter presents textual evidence to support the view that Solovyov's historical account of the growth and development of religious belief in China, and of its determining influence on Chinese culture and social organisation, is marked by a *lack of objectivity*.

I argue that this essay is not in the least characteristic of a philosopher reputed for receptivity to a wide scope of ideas and for his readiness to overcome cultural differences. The following examination will reveal that Solovyov approached his subject

matter from a European viewpoint, from within the horizons of a Western, 'Christian' culture.

In *China and Europe* Solovyov provides criticism on two levels:

(a) taking Taoism to be the most consistent expression of the Chinese instinct to live in the past and to endow that past with an 'absolute' value, he examines the theoretical, philosophical basis of Taoism itself;
(b) he considers the consequences of Taoist beliefs for Chinese culture.

Solovyov views Taoism as a teaching that emanates quite naturally from the established Chinese cult of ancestor worship.[6] He explains that family life and political state rule were founded on this cult, and that in both spheres (family interests and state interests) important decisions were taken only after the wishes of the 'ancestors' had been ascertained.[7] Thus, the code of conduct for the Chinese is determined entirely by reference to the past.[8] Even the isolated instances of reform (instigated by Confucius) represent no change, but rather, an effective means to prevent innovation and thus guarantee the most complete return to antiquity.

Solovyov further observes that this very conservatism, this exclusive attachment to traditional bases of life, was the point of departure for a speculative philosophy that was distinctly Chinese in its character.[9] The exclusivity already apparent in the Chinese preoccupation with the past (and that rendered the Chinese ideal *false* precisely because it was 'exclusive'), argues Solovyov, was taken to its extreme and absurd conclusion in the doctrine of Lao-Tzu.[10]

Solovyov contends that Lao-Tzu was able to provide a more effective 'absolutisation' of the past than was possible through the private family cult of ancestor worship or the same cult on the state level.[11]

The opening lines in Solovyov's critique of Lao-Tzu's ideas do not inspire confidence in the objectivity of the observations to follow:

> As a speculative philosopher, Lao-Tzu seeks an absolute principle; as a genuine Chinese, he seeks it exclusively in the past – therefore he seeks the *absolute past*, that which precedes all existing being.[12] (Solovyov's italics)

This does *not* constitute a serious basis for philosophical argument. Correct as Solovyov may have been in holding that Lao-Tzu sought an 'absolute principle', (designated as Tao in his system), to claim that he sought it exclusively in the past is, at the very least, misleading. Solovyov appears to confuse the issue further by his reference to 'the absolute past' (*bezuslovnoe proshedshee*), 'that which precedes all existing being'.

A speculative philosopher may indeed seek an absolute principle, one that 'precedes all existing being'. However, that precedence is not solely a matter of *chronological time*, as Solovyov's words really appear to suggest; Lao-Tzu's designation of Tao as an absolute principle did not merely entail a retreat into remoter and remoter chronological time. Solovyov's words lead one to think that this is precisely what was entailed. The kind of *precedence* actually denoted by 'that which precedes all existing being' is a matter of philosophical status; it is akin to the precedence denoted in the Aristotelian term 'the Unmoved Mover'.

Aside from this suggestion that Lao-Tzu sought to place the central term of his speculative system in a remote chronological past, Solovyov writes that he conceived this attempt on the *basis* of his being Chinese (*istiy kitaets*). Such argument is not acceptable as serious or objective criticism of a philosophical system: even if one concedes that the Chinese as a race may have tended to look to the past for their values (a generalisation that cannot be made absolute, in any case), such a criticism as Solovyov makes still excludes the possibility that Lao-Tzu *saw* the limitations of his compatriots and sought to *overcome their* commonly held views.

From the above brief examination of Solovyov's opening attack on the Taoist view it may be seen that his initial arguments lack a secure objective basis. One may now proceed to Solovyov's criticisms of the Taoist ideal of *the Sage*. In considering how the Sage is depicted in the work entitled *Tao Te Ching* (the principal text of Taoism), Solovyov confines himself to a negative evaluation of Lao-Tzu's ideal. For the purposes of his critique, he gives a summary of material found in Chapter LVI of the *Tao Te Ching*, (working from a French translation by Stanislas Julien, Paris 1842):

> The man who knows Tao does not speak; he who speaks does not know Tao. The man who knows Tao closes his lips firmly, closes his ears and eyes, he suppresses his own activity, he severs himself from all ties, he restrains his own light, he simulates

> fools; then it is possible to say that he resembles Tao; he is not accessible either to kindness or cruelty, to gain or loss, honour or dishonour, and for this reason he is the most respected man in the entire universe.[13]

Solovyov does not provide a very extensive discussion of this ideal: having located references to 'inaction', he appears satisfied that this inaction and avoidance of desire (because conducive to suffering) comprises the whole ideal of the Taoist Sage.[14]

The passage cited from the *Tao Te Ching* offers scope for alternative interpretations regarding Lao-Tzu's view of the Sage, but the text of *China and Europe* leads one to conclude that Solovyov himself was not prompted even to explore the possibilities of an alternative, more positive evaluation of this Taoist ideal than that which he provides. More specifically, it has to be said that Solovyov dismisses the figure of the Taoist Sage without raising or considering any of the following points:

(a) is it possible that Lao-Tzu has managed to express an ideal of *disinterest* or *impartiality* with regard to action?;
(b) has he portrayed a man capable of rising above thoughts of *gain* and *merit* and *loss*? (The text examined by Solovyov suggests that such an interpretation is at least plausible: '. . . he is not accessible . . . to gain or loss');
(c) has the Sage, here depicted, achieved what, in numerous other Traditions, is taken to be an indication of wisdom, namely the ability to go beyond thinking dualistically, beyond thinking exclusively in terms of opposites? (Again, the text allows for such an interpretation: 'he is not accessible either to kindness or cruelty, to gain or loss, honour or dishonour . . .');
(d) is the marked reluctance to speak, on the part of Lao-Tzu's Sage, any reflection of the difficulty inherently involved in communicating and affirming truths about the essential First Principle from which all else originates?;
(e) does Lao-Tzu's Sage represent a *spiritual type* in any respect? For instance, he is ready to appear a *fool* in the eyes of the world (the text says that 'he simulates fools'). So, could he be viewed as an example of that spiritual type, the 'holy fool'? Secondly, could there be a valid comparison between Lao-Tzu's Sage and the ironic Socratic Sage, who teaches partly through a guise of 'foolishness'?;

(f) Does the *Tao Te Ching* bear out the teaching of most spiritual Traditions about the intimate link between personal self-mastery and 'skilful' government of the state, the Body Politic?

It seems to me that the points enumerated above warrant some treatment in an assessment of Lao-Tzu's ideal. In view of the fact that Solovyov had appropriate translations of the text at hand, his failure to follow even one of these several lines of enquiry seems indicative of a reluctance, on his part, to accord these materials the scholarly attention needed for a balanced cultural survey of Christian and non-Christian societies.

In this context, a further relevant point is this: Solovyov notes that when Lao-Tzu disparages learning, this involves a contradiction or undermining of his own position: 'He denied the "light of the mind" [while] being himself a deep and subtle thinker.'[15] Yet, Lao-Tzu was aware of the paradox involved in the wise man's claim of ignorance. Of all the above-mentioned six points missing from Solovyov's consideration of the Taoist Sage, it is curious that he should have failed to discern the theme of what we may call 'wise foolishness'. In at least two ways his own cultural background provides for familiarity with this idea:

(i) the figure of the 'holy fool' was particularly known to Russians and was significant in their spiritual Tradition. This recognition of the fool has a textual basis in the Bible:

> If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God . . .
>
> (1 Corinthians 3, 18–20)

(ii) Solovyov personally had the highest regard for the Greek philosopher Socrates (an attitude evident in his *The Drama of Plato's Life*). This was a figure who, according to the record provided in the Platonic Dialogues, did not assert himself as a bearer of specific wise teachings, but who, rather, was conscious of the scope of his ignorance and measured any seeming wisdom of his simply in relation to the *greater ignorance* of others. And on occasions when he did feel qualified to instruct others, by exposing the weaknesses of his opponents' arguments, he used irony and seeming 'foolishness' as his methods of instruction. Solovyov did not take any of Socrates' assumed 'foolishness' at face value, but consistently

> treated him as a man who spoke with authority on philosophical questions and their solutions.

It is difficult to determine what, apart from the cultural difference, allows the Russian philosopher to accept Socrates as authoritative and to dismiss Lao-Tzu as obscurantist.

Having considered certain cultural factors involved in Solovyov's resistance to Lao-Tzu and his teaching, it is appropriate to analyse the reasoned criticisms that Solovyov levelled against Lao-Tzu's philosophy. He detected in Lao-Tzu's fundamental position 'a hostility towards reason and learning', and observes in his essay that

> Hostility towards reason and learning is characteristic of many mystical thinkers. But with Lao-Tzu, as a genuine Chinese, this obscurantism based on principle (*etot printsipial'niy obskurantizm*) has its own distinctive character and special significance.[16]

We come, now, to Solovyov's description and treatment of the central term in the Taoist scheme. For the Taoist

> The first absolute principle of all existing being has *in itself* no positive definition or name, it is *unspoken* or *unuttered*.[17] (Solovyov's italics)

The Tao cannot be apprehended solely by means of definitions or distinctions, for positive definitions rule out the applicability of their contrary terms to the Tao. And, further, the ineffable nature of the principle that contains within it all potentialities of being is conveyed by the designation 'the unspoken' or 'the unuttered'. No limiting attribute is found to apply to this first absolute principle, and Lao-Tzu's system is consistent in withholding all such terms from its characterisation of that absolute principle. It may justly be said that any 'description' of the Tao is of a distinctly *provisional* nature. Solovyov views this approach to philosophy as an attempt to retreat to a stage of 'primordial indifference' before the process of defining and distinguishing concepts was initiated. If this is the true nature of Lao-Tzu's enterprise, then, argues Solovyov, *thought* is not operative in the approach to Tao. The 'way of thought' (*put' myshleniya*) tends in quite the opposite direction, for it is dependent on the drawing of distinctions, the maintenance of distinctions between mutually exclusive terms, and so forth:

> If the real principle of all is absolute indifference, then the way of thought and knowledge is least applicable of all for uniting or conforming oneself with that principle; for these activities [that is, thought and speculation] consist precisely in emergence from primordial indifference, in the affirmation of known definitions and distinctions. The condition of the thinking and understanding mind is [that of] direct opposition to the condition of Tao.[18]

From the above passage it is clear that, in Solovyov's view of the matter, philosophical thought cannot concern itself with provisional descriptions, but must provide fixed definitions and distinctions if it is to impart knowledge. This is the procedure characteristic of *rational, discursive thought*; this is the procedure recognised by Solovyov, and the task of imparting knowledge is associated explicitly with this procedure. The advantages to be gained by working with provisional descriptions, or the possibility that they may afford an intuitive type of apprehension, are not admitted by Solovyov in this essay on Chinese philosophical and religious beliefs. If rational, discursive thought and Tao diverge, Solovyov sees value residing in the former of these.

Solovyov's critique of Taoism (Collected Works VI, 116–24) constitutes part of an attempt to determine 'the essence of the Chinese spirit' (*sushchnost' kitaizma*, p. 122). He summarises his conclusions in the following way:

> Absolute emptiness or indifference as a speculative principle, and the denial of life, knowledge and progress as an inevitable practical result – here is the essence of the Chinese spirit, erected into an exclusive and consistent system.[19]

I have endeavoured to show, in the preceding pages, that Solovyov's examination of Taoist beliefs and values was less rigorous and painstaking than one might reasonably expect to find in a study of this scope. In his assessment of the Taoist ideal of the Sage there appears to be minimal examination of alternative views, and therefore he was *not* in a position to offer the firm conclusions that one finds in this important section of his essay.

* * *

At this point it is necessary to consider Solovyov's view of Chinese achievements in the cultural field, for this is the second level on which he provides criticism of the Chinese nation. Solovyov's observations regarding this subject belong to Part VIII of *China and Europe*.[20]

In the context of some observations on the Chinese ideal of longevity, the reader comes across a series of value-judgements that are presented by Solovyov as statements of acknowledged fact that simply require our assent. That the author takes his own judgements to be matters of indisputable fact may be seen from the text (p. 139): '. . . There remains the similarly undoubted fact that . . .' (*Ostaetsya drugoy stol' zhe nesomnenniy fakt, chto. . .*); 'It is equally beyond dispute that . . .' (*Tak bessporno, chto . . .*). (It may just be that it was uncertainty rather than certainty which caused Solovyov to be so emphatic in this instance, as if a measure of self-persuasion were still needed). The subject of the various value-judgements in this part of his essay is the extent and alleged poverty of Chinese artistic expression:

> The gift of earthly well-being and longevity undoubtedly testifies practically in favour of the Chinese life principle. But alongside this, there remains the similarly undoubted fact that Chinese culture, for all its firmness and material fullness, has proved spiritually fruitless and useless for the rest of mankind. It is good for the Chinese themselves, but it has not given to the world one solitary great idea, nor a single lasting and absolutely valuable creation in any sphere at all (*ni v kakoy oblasti*). The Chinese are a huge nation, but not a great nation. And in this nation there have not been any great people. The sole exception is Lao-Tzu.[21]

In more specific terms Solovyov mentions the various arts:

> With the exception of a few genuinely poetic songs and fairy-tales, such as all nations have, even the completely uncultured ones, all the rest is devoid of any aesthetic significance and can have merely historical and ethnographic interest.[22]
>
> It is equally beyond dispute that in music, painting, and likewise in positive science, the Chinese have remained on the lower elementary levels, although in some cases they have manifested a great capacity for minor work.[23]

However much one makes allowances for the scarcity of reliable information available to Solovyov, regarding the development and the actual state of the arts in China, it is plain that the categorical tone of his conclusions on this subject is to be regretted. His view that the lives of the Chinese are long but unproductive cannot be substantiated, and this remains the case, even if one does not hold the ideal of longevity to be, in itself, the most profound and worthy of ideals for men to pursue.

Purely in his capacity as a 'historian', Solovyov should have thought it at least *implausible* that the Chinese people had failed to produce a single great idea or lasting creation 'in any sphere at all'. However, of the great number of cultures and societies, Christian and non-Christian, considered by the Russian philosopher, it is Chinese culture alone that elicits such condemnatory and largely unsubstantiated conclusions as we find in this essay.

The two concluding parts of *China and Europe* (IX and X) contain Solovyov's expression of his belief in the rightness and efficacy of the Christian, European (or, more precisely, the Judaeo-Christian) idea of *universal progress*. As will become clear in the remaining part of the present chapter, he was concerned to show the validity of the European perspective and of the Christian emphasis upon universal salvation.

It is significant that, in the last stages of his argument, Solovyov *modifies* his criticism of the Chinese and of their preoccupation with the past. There is actually a *transition* from criticism of Chinese religious conceptions to partial acceptance (see below). This transition allows Solovyov to put forward his central concluding idea, which is as follows: on the account that Solovyov provides, the fundamental Chinese religious ideal has to some extent served the Chinese themselves, but is found, upon examination of its central premises, to be deficient and not wholly satisfying. The conclusion which Solovyov offers in this essay is that the Christian, European view, centred on the ideas of progress and change, can 'complete' the Chinese ideal and life principle: 'We Europeans must offer China not a denial but a *completion* of its life principle'[24] (Solovyov's italics). This essay shows the Russian philosopher to have been a conscious apologist for the European view, for the European view as offering the final realization of humanity's religious aspirations:

> If attachment to the past, service to the ancestors, constitutes the truth of the Chinese worldview, then this truth attains its own

> fulfilment only in the Christian, European idea of universal progress, as the path for the attainment of true life.[25]

This affirmation is immediately preceded by Solovyov's reference to the idea that Christian goals cannot be realized without man's active work and efforts. This true life of the future must be *earned* by man.[26] An idea of the consistency of Solovyov's views in this matter may be had if one turns to an almost identical expression of this theme, one year later, in the 1891 lecture *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*.[27] Convinced as Solovyov was that this stress on active work was indeed the true response required of Christians, and of religious believers generally, it is understandable that he really failed to find much sympathy with the spirit in which Lao-Tzu propounded the principles of Taoism. It must not be overlooked that his critical view of Lao-Tzu's speculative philosophy, and the 'alien' Chinese attitudes that philosophy represented for him, was *maintained* throughout the entire last decade of his life. That ten-year period, 1890 to 1900, not only saw the publication of some of the philosopher's major works (including *Justificaton of the Good* and *Three Conversations*), but itself represents a significant proportion of a twenty-six-year-long writing career.

There is a substantial body of biographical evidence to show that the critical view of China expressed in the philosopher's essay *China and Europe* coincides with the historian Sergey Solovyov's negative evaluation of that country. The possibility of direct paternal influence here should be given serious consideration. How far a clear 'intellectual' debt can be established is a problematic point, and it would be unwise to press such a claim very far. The philosopher certainly acknowledged that his father played a significant role in his own development,[28] but his words '. . . an influence on my spiritual development' (*vliyanie na moë dukhovnoe razvitie*) do not make plain that it was an 'intellectual' influence.

The matter may to some extent be clarified by reference to another case where the views of father and son are, in substance, extremely similar, and where paternal influence is highly plausible: the historian's and the philosopher's very positive attitude to Peter the Great and to the Petrine Reforms.[29]

From a reading of Vladimir Solovyov's article 'Some Words in Defence of Peter the Great' (*Neskol'ko slov v zashchitu Petra Velikogo*) and of his *Byzantinism and Russia* one may judge how very much he

admired Peter the Great; he thought of his achievements as being akin to the achievements of Alexander Pushkin in the field of literature. Such a stance is noteworthy and incongruous in a man who was in so many important respects a 'Slavophile'. It may be that the historian Sergey Solovyov played a part in guiding his son towards that appreciation of Peter the Great. In *Byzantinism and Russia* the philosopher specifically cites his father's *The History of Russia from most Ancient Times* (ten times) as an authoritative source of information on Peter I. But aside from this, the likelihood is considerable that at home Sergey Solovyov expressed views that happened to appeal to his son Vladimir's temperament and mind. I suggest that, in the case of their antipathy towards Chinese culture, the influence of father upon son may well be of the same kind, a temperamental appeal as well as an intellectual influence.

In two biographies of Vladimir Solovyov there is strong evidence in support of this viewpoint. The younger Sergey Solovyov describes the historian (his own grandfather) in the following terms: 'Considering activity and struggle to be the basis of life, he had an aversion to the East, and was a convinced European'.[30] S. M. Luk'yanov, in his three-volume biographical study of the philosopher, confirms the point about the growing closeness of outlook between father and son:

> As Vladimir Solovyov became a man, he made himself a more and more conscious participant in the spiritual life of his father (*delalsya vsë bolee i bolee soznatel'nym uchastnikom v dukhovnoy zhizni otsa*), who, in turn, became increasingly convinced that in this son of his there was a particularly fortunate combination of the good hereditary traits of the Solovyovs and the Romanovs [the mother's family].[31]

The resemblance in temperament between Vladimir Solovyov and his father is in actual fact made explicit in *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov*, where the author describes the very different Vsevolod Sergeyevich (1849–1903):

> Vsevolod Sergeyevich was of entirely different material from his father and brothers. And perhaps only he interpreted Russian Orthodoxy in its Eastern aspect (*v ego vostochnoy stikhii*), with its '*Tsar-Batyushka*', with complete passivity, meekness , with an awareness of the radical flaw in human nature, of the weakness of

> the [human] personality in the face of fate, and with hope in the mercy of God. He did not like Peter the Great – the favourite hero of his father and his brother; his [own] ideal was the 'most meek' Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich.[32]

In the light of this biographical material it would seem appropriate to give due recognition to the temperamental affinity between the historian Sergey Solovyov and his son Vladimir. As regards the coincidence of their intellectual *goals*, there is further supporting evidence. Dmitry Stremoukhov explicitly mentions identical outlook and goals of Sergey and Vladimir Solovyov in relation to Slavophile teachings:

> In short, the son [would come to] criticise the philosophy of the Slavophiles from the same point of view as the father had criticised their historical theories.[33]

Vladimir Solovyov's father took the occasion to write a short autobiographical work *Notes for my Children* (*Zapiski dlya moikh detey*), and in the context of describing the various ideas which influenced him in his student years, he wrote of aims that one may identify precisely in the works and life of his philosopher son:

> The time passed not so much in a study of facts as in reflection about them, for a philosophical orientation predominated with us: Hegel turned everyone's head. And this thought occurred to me: to study philosophy in order to use it as the means for the affirmation of religion, of Christianity.[34]

I have endeavoured to discern the attitudes and premises that underlie Vladimir Solovyov's study *China and Europe*. One particular biographical reference[35] indicates just how far back in his life his generally antipathetic view of China may be traced:

> At the age of twelve and thirteen "he would animatedly prove what a great danger China presents for Russia and for all Europe in the future". Thus, in the boy [Vladimir] Solovyov there are already found all the seeds of his future: the fear of Antichrist, and his notion of the 'Yellow Peril', and the militarism of *Three Conversations* – the conviction that 'the sword and the cross are one'.[36]

* * *

The foregoing sections of the present chapter treat Solovyov's investigation of religious beliefs in China, as set out in his essay of 1890, *China and Europe*. The major criticism that may be levelled against this work is that Solovyov was not consistently rigorous and objective in examining his materials: in some instances, value-judgements about the cultural achievements of the Chinese are offered as matters of established fact, and a number of inferences and conclusions drawn by Solovyov are not sufficiently supported by argument to be acceptable. These considerable weaknesses put in question the reliability of his cultural-cum-historical *comparative method* for the examination of philosophical and religious beliefs. The *biographical* materials cited above indicate that a good case can be made for viewing the flaws in *China and Europe* as at least partly attributable to a temperamental antipathy of the author towards the culture examined in the essay.

Having seen how 'alien' and worthless Solovyov considered Chinese values to be (those emanating from 'ancestor worship', Taoism and the various 'magical' and 'shamanistic' forms of a later, debased Taoism, as well as from Confucianism), we are in a good position to appreciate the force of the philosopher's message in his poem 'Panmongolism'. The remaining observations in the present chapter relate specifically to the historical parallel that he drew between the threatened Byzantine society in the last years before the Empire fell and its nineteenth-century equivalent, Russia.

It has already been shown (in Chapter 8) how greatly Solovyov deplored merely nominal allegiance to Christian values. Also, it was stressed that in his view the society which abandons the notion of perfectibility endangers its very existence, as the historical example of Byzantium seems to testify. This general point is made in *Byzantinism and Russia*:

> In an imperfect world only he who frees himself from imperfection is worthy of existence. Byzantium perished because it shunned the very idea of perfection. Any being, single or collective, which rejects this idea inevitably perishes.[37]

When one reflects how much significance Solovyov assigned to Russia's 'Christian' virtues and character, her capacity for

self-denial (evident in the Russians' invitation to the Varangians to rule over them), and to her decisive future role as a guardian of true Christian teaching[38] – all of which ideas featured prominently in his optimistic writings on Church unity during the 1880s – the fact that he came to equate Russia with 'fallen', defeated Byzantium must strike one as a painful admission regarding the faith of the Russian people. The extent of Byzantium's apostasy (*otstupnichestvo*) is uncompromisingly shown in the second stanza of 'Panmongolism', and the aptness of these words to contemporary Russia is made plain:

> When in corrupt Byzantium
> The sacred altar grew cold,
> The people and prince, the priest and ruler
> Denied the Messiah . . .[39]

In accordance with his long-established procedure of comparing *that which is* (*to, chto est'*) and *that which ought to be* (*to, chto dolzhno byt'*), the philosopher found many features of contemporary Russian life as cause for serious concern and criticism. Realities such as the limitations imposed on the exchange, expression and publication of ideas; the regrettable growth of nationalism; the active discrimination against minority groups and nationalities within the Empire; and the extent of misunderstanding, indifference or prejudice that large numbers of educated Russians showed in their relation to religious matters and the affairs of the Orthodox Church – all these persuaded Solovyov that his compatriots barely aspired to live by Christian ideals.

All the normal causes that operate to reduce commitment to spiritual practice and concerns (the variety of distractions offered by secular life, intellectual fashions and so forth) were reinforced by a specific tradition of historical thought that applied to the Russians' conception of themselves. This was the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome.[40] This idea, which had over a considerable period of time gained a hold over the imagination of Russians, now required re-examination. Solovyov suggested that this historically-based idea was a likely source of self-deception and self-flattery, however understandable the origin of the idea:

> In the Russian national consciousness, inasfar as it was expressed in the thoughts and writings of our men [of letters], there

> emerged, after the fall of Constantinople, a firm conviction that the meaning of Christian rule would from that point transfer to Russia, that [Russia] is the Third and last Rome. For our forefathers it was permissible to remain with this idea in its initial form of an unconscious feeling or presentiment. We are required to test it by consistent thought and experience, and through this either to put it on the level of rational awareness or to reject it as a childish dream or an arbitrary pretension.[41]

Solovyov's suggestion that the ideal of the Third Rome was becoming increasingly remote and deceptive – one that only Russia's flatterers wish to perpetuate – finds expression both in *Byzantinism and Russia* (just cited) and in 'Panmongolism':

> And all Russia's flatterers repeat:
> "You are the Third Rome! You are the Third Rome!"[42]

Vasiliy Rozanov's assessment of Solovyov's place in Russian culture includes the following characterisation and conveys a degree of anguish in the philosopher's writings to which N. A. Setnitsky also refers (in his article 'Russian Thinkers on China'):

> From behind the priest and professor there emerged the personality of a journalist, the most animated, changeable one, now stabbing, then crying, shouting and [acting in a] presumptuous [way], a genuine Parthian horseman,* who did not give any peace to the sleeping, complacent Rome.[43]

Setnitsky writes of how, in the last days of his life, the philosopher felt confronted with the possibility that authentic Christianity had not survived – 'There is no Christianity', (*Khristianstva net . . .*):

> Thus, in the last days was uttered that word which had perhaps not been pronounced aloud earlier anywhere in the writings of V. S. Solovyov, but which, if one judges by his last works, was present in his consciousness in a veiled form, bringing a special tension into his condition and his creative work.[44]

*Here Rozanov meant to say that Solovyov could skilfully direct blows at his enemies, himself resembling those Parthian tribesmen who developed the ability to fire arrows or javelins behind them as they made their escape on horseback.

Setnitsky appreciated that, on the Solovyovian account of these matters, the critical point when China becomes a threatening enemy for Russia and Western Europe is

> when we ourselves prove not to be in a condition to attain and accommodate the fullness of the Christian truth and by the same token [are unable] to bring, transmit and give to the East the vital and living (*zhiznennoe i zhivoe*) completion of the truths worked out by it.[45]

This is virtually a summary of the very conclusion offered in Solovyov's *China and Europe*;[46] but also, Setnitsky discerns a *transition* in the philosopher's outlook between 1890 and 1894. In 1890 the possibility of a conflict between China and Europe is thought to *depend* on Europe's failure to accomplish her mission (*v sluchae neispolneniya Evropoy svoey missii*), whereas by 1894 the conflict, for Solovyov, becomes merely a question of *time* (*stolknovenie eë s Zapadom stanovitsya dlya nego voprosom lish' vremeni*).[47]

One more important element in Solovyov's criticism of complacent Byzantine society requires mention. It occurs in two important sets of articles that Solovyov wrote during the early 1880s: *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics* (*Velikiy spor i khristianskaya politika*, 1883) and *Judaism and the Christian Question* (*Evreystvo i khristianskiy vopros*, 1884). That the idea expressed there still held validity for Solvyov in the 1890s (the period examined in the present chapter) is established by the fact of its re-emergence in the 1891 lecture *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*,[48] in *Mahommed, His Life and Teaching* (1896),[49] and in *Byzantinism and Russia*.[50]

Considering the fate of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, Solovyov proffered the view that defeat at the hands of the Muslims was appropriate and even logical. The idea finds possibly its most explicit expression in *Judaism and the Christian Question*,[51] and is dependent on his description of the Islamic religion as a *partial* revelation of the Divine truth, and of Christianity as a *complete* and adequate revelation of that truth. Lacking the teaching of *Godmanhood*, Islām is on a lower level of religious understanding than Christianity, in Solovyov's scheme; however, the degree of faithful adherence to the Koranic Law was conspicuously greater than the Byzantines' adherence to their Christian code:

> The Muslim, believing in his own simple and not too great religious moral law, conscientiously fulfils it, both in his personal and his social life: he *judges* civil and criminal matters according to the Koran, *conquers* according to the direct command of the Koran, treats alien and conquered people, again, according to the directions of the Koran, and so forth.[52]

Solovyov felt convinced that the Christians of Byzantium erred more seriously than did true followers of Islām. On the basis of that conviction he wrote that the defeat of the Byzantine Empire precisely at the hands of the morally consistent Muslims represented a justifiable and symbolic retribution.

> The victory of Islām, that almost eradicated Christianity from Asia and Africa, was in the first place a matter of crude force, but as well as this it had some moral justification. . . .[53] Thus, the triumph of the Muslims was a just punishment of the Christian East.[54]

The highly significant point here is that Solovyov deemed consistent adherence to a partial truth to be *more* valuable than inconsistency in the application of a complete or absolute truth. It was on *such* grounds that he criticised his own compatriots and professed believers in the Orthodox faith for their *complacency*.

The aim of the present chapter has been to set the celebrated poem 'Panmongolism' in the context of essays that Solovyov wrote during the decade 1890 to 1900, notably of *China and Europe*, a work which has received minimal critical attention to date. 'Panmongolism' has been shown to contain ideas that appear prominently and frequently in the philosopher's writings of that last period in his life. Furthermore, explicit references to central ideas for the poem may be traced as far back as Solovyov's *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, written in 1883, that is, eleven years prior to the poem.

The poem and the thematically related articles and essays examined here illustrate the extent of Solovyov's concern with cultural comparisons, a concern that really forms an important element in his religious philosophy. There remains further scope for research into questions regarding the application and validity of his *comparative method*, and this and the previous chapter are intended to serve as preparatory ground for such research. In *The*

Drama of Plato's Life he treated his central subject in an effective way that allowed him to pursue themes that had long preoccupied him. His stern criticism of those Christians who regard themselves as righteous believers, but fail to help create a spiritual community, is central to Solovyov's emphasis upon the *practical* application of the Gospel teachings. This is particularly clear in his lecture *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*, but his argument would have had greater force if he had refrained from citing only Byzantium as an example of the 'nominally Christian' society. His analysis and observations regarding religion are founded upon a very deep knowledge of the Judaeo-Christian Tradition and sources. In my examination of Solovyov's work *China and Europe* I have brought together material which establishes that his comparative method did not yield uniformly objective results when applied by him to a non-Christian and at the same time non-European culture.

Solovyov explicitly censured apologists for the Oriental philosophies[55] which, for him, remained 'alien'. The attraction that these philosophies held for his one-time philosophical mentor, Arthur Schopenhauer, certainly leaves no trace in Solovyov's writings of 1890 to 1900.

Conclusion

My purpose has been to work towards a reassessment of the religious philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov. His writings are the fruit of direct religious experience and of many years' reflection upon the spiritual life. This alone would be sufficient reason to study his thought, but, in addition to this, Solovyov's philosophy exemplifies certain valuable features of Russian religious thought, notably its emphasis upon practical wisdom. Though he passionately advocated an active transformation of society and adherence to the ideal of social justice, Solovyov resisted Marxist solutions. His stance eventually inspired a whole renaissance of Russian religious thought, and there can be no doubt whatsoever that Solovyov's ideas informed the thinking of such prominent figures as Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergey Bulgakov, Pavel Florensky and Simeon Frank. Solovyov's defence of the autonomy of the individual aligns him with his great contemporary, Dostoevsky. For these and other reasons it seems to me that the time has come for a greater awareness of Vladimir Solovyov's place in Russian intellectual history.

The scale of Solovyov's philosophic enterprise was vast. I hope to have shown that he confronted, and attempted to resolve, many of the central questions that face theologians and philosophers. In addition to setting out his central teachings, it has also been necessary to take into account Solovyov's criticism of foregoing philosophers (in works such as his *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*) and to show how he sought to rectify the imbalance and defects of their speculative systems. He himself aimed to provide not simply a speculative system of his own but, rather, a major synthesis of the chief branches of knowledge. From the very earliest years of his scholarly career he believed that the findings of philosophy and of natural science support traditional Christian teaching, and, while he looked to the New Testament as the source of our most reliable knowledge concerning God and divine–human relations, he also examined contemporary theories of evolution, and especially contemporary theories of knowledge, for evidence that might illuminate the central Christian account of the world.

Solovyov personally accepted the Christian Gospels and the

whole of the New Testament as the Word of God, fully revealed to man through Jesus Christ. He took Christianity to be the religion most directly and consistently concerned with the welfare of man: he argued, in his writings, that Christianity values the *freedom* of man and that, unlike other religions (notably Islām), Christianity provides for man's active *participation* in the spiritual transformation and redemption of the created order. He accepted the Church's central teaching according to which Christ Himself, through His Incarnation and sacrificial death, and through His victory over death, effectively restored the Divine image in natural, 'fallen' man.

Seriously dismayed by the wide-spread resistance to traditional Christian teachings among the educated Orthodox laity of his day, Solovyov undertook to formulate a rationally coherent account of Christian teachings, an account that avoided the defects and the one-sidedness of standard interpretations. This very ambitious enterprise appeared to him as a necessary task to accomplish; he devoted his energies to that goal at the very outset of his scholarly life, and he sought a variety of ways to affirm the truth and the worth of the Christian Gospels.

To a certain extent, this variety of approach reflected the philosopher's own cast of mind, and his very considerable reliance upon *historical* argument is an important distinctive feature of his religious philosophy. This variety of approach was also, partly, determined by his time and intellectual milieu. His writings on mysticism owe much to his extensive reading of the early Church Fathers, but he also considered mysticism in the light of contemporary scholarly debate regarding Empiricist and other accounts of human knowledge. It is clear, from his treatment of Empiricism and other accounts of knowledge, that Solovyov was very familiar indeed with these schools of philosophical thought. Although critical in his conclusions, he did treat the premises of Empiricism and of Rationalism seriously, and he devoted many pages of his early works to reasoned criticism of these major schools. This was, from his standpoint, a preliminary stage that had to precede any sound and convincing defence of mysticism as a 'mode of knowledge'.

In my study I have taken into account such centrally important works as Solovyov's *Lectures on Godmanhood* and the critical literature on these works. I have also devoted special attention to the following: *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky, The Great Controversy and Christian Politics, Judaism and the Christian*

Question, The History and Future of Theocracy, 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it', *China and Europe, On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview, Byzantinism and Russia* and *The Drama of Plato's Life.* Examination of these particular works has enabled me to establish the extent of Solovyov's reliance upon *historical* argument in treating religious questions. In his defence of Christianity he employed not just theological and philosophical categories, but also historical argument and cultural comparisons. I have sought to draw attention to his preoccupation with *values.* This preoccupation becomes most clearly noticeable in the works that contrast Christian societies and non-Christian societies. Through his extensive use of cultural-historical parallels and contrasts, Solovyov intended to impart to his readers an increasingly refined understanding of the inherent strengths of their Christian faith and Tradition.

It seemed to me necessary to examine Solovyov's *comparative method* in detail. In Chapter 8 I trace his successful application of this method; the material in Chapter 9, however, constitutes evidence of the way that cultural considerations (in this case, a clear antipathy towards Chinese culture) could adversely affect Solovyov's evaluation of a people's religious ideals and practice. I supplement these two chapters with an extensive examination of Solovyov's assessment of the major non-Christian religions (in Chapter 6). He classified the various religions in a hierarchical order, describing Buddhism, for instance, as 'superior' to nature worship but as 'inferior' to the Christian revelation. It emerges that Solovyov was a quite conscious apologist for West European values, for a religious Tradition closely linked with the notions of progress and change (in his essay *'China and Europe'* and other works). Although he recognised that the contemplative ideal and the active ideal complement one another (and wrote of them as complementary within Christianity), he was unprepared to recognise the merits of Taoist philosophy in China, and he portrayed Lao-Tzu, generally regarded its leading exponent, as an advocate of complete quietism. He characterised Indian spirituality in broadly similar terms to this (in his tenth lecture on Godmanhood). There is a significant difference in Solovyov's treatment of Indian spirituality on the one hand and of Judaic spirituality on the other. His writings and his personal life reveal a strong, deep-lying affinity with the Jewish people and a respect for their historical and cultural achievements. He readily devoted his

energies to the study of their religion. His appreciation of the Jewish people, and his concern for their welfare, were entirely commendable. However, it needs to be noted, in the context of his comparative evaluation of non-Christian religions, that his appreciation of the Jews induced him to view even their faults in a positive light, whereas the very highest achievements of the religious philosophers in India and China (especially the latter) became the subject of Solovyov's criticism. Consequently, it has to be said that the typological classification of religions devised by Solovyov is too subjective to be safely employed by students of religion. The part of Solovyov's typological scheme which remains valid is his treatment of the continuity between Judaism and Christianity and of the essential differences between them. Here one finds, on the one hand, a very profound knowledge of Old Testament scripture and exegesis, and also numerous inspired passages on sacred corporeality (*svyataya telesnost'*) and its religious significance for Jews and Christians respectively.

An aspect of Judaic spirituality that requires separate mention and that was accorded a prominent place in Solovyov's religious thought is the theocratic ideal. He associated the theocratic ideal with two central notions in Christianity: firstly, with the notion that the Kingdom of God must be realized on earth (affirmed by the Lord's Prayer); secondly, with the notion of a 'spiritual community'. Although Solovyov's major work on theocracy remained uncompleted, the existing chapters allow us to gauge how very profoundly he had studied and reflected upon theocracy as a religious and social ideal, both from the Judaic and the Christian points of view. His writings on theocracy also yield valuable insights regarding three 'spiritual types' of man: the High Priest, the King and the Prophet. Here Solovyov stressed the Christian symbolism according to which Christ Himself is viewed as Priest, King and Prophet, the ultimate figure of authority, from Whom any temporal rulers derive *their* authority. Though Solovyov himself resembled the 'prophetic' type of man in a number of respects (for instance, his position outside the established hierarchy of the Church), his personal integrity may be judged by his genuine reluctance publicly to adopt the role (and the high status) of the Prophet, even while, privately, he may have felt that vocation quite strongly.

There are good grounds for accepting Ernest Radlov's description of Solovyov as first and foremost a moral philosopher. His works

The Spiritual Foundations of Life and *Justification of the Good* treat individual morality and collective morality very extensively. The philosopher's acceptance of the idea that the Christian Church on earth is a living organic body (symbolically designated as the Bride of Christ and as the Body of Christ) caused him to attach paramount importance to the *universal* nature of salvation and to *collective* responsibility. He regarded it as inappropriate for the Christian philosopher to confine himself to the sphere of the individual's subjective morality. He was deeply concerned for the spiritual health of Russian society itself, and this was very clear in his writings and activities of the decade 1890 to 1900. Those years of the philosopher's life merit special attention, for an examination of his celebrated poem 'Panmongolism' (written in 1894) and of various essays belonging to that period shows that he was making consistent and very specific criticisms of Russian society.

Vladimir Solovyov experienced three mystical visions during his lifetime, visions which permitted him to sense directly the condition of harmony that now eludes humanity, but that may be attained 'in the fullness of time'. Solovyov personally regarded these visions not as a right or privilege for him, but as experiences that called forth a moral response from him. He consistently wrote of the moral preparation that the Prophet must undergo if he is properly to follow his calling and to speak with authority. It would be broadly correct to say that, according to Solovyov, what is required of the individual Christian believer is required of the Prophet and of the Christian philosopher *a fortiori*. If the Prophet's perception of life and of spiritual values is generally more penetrating than that of the ordinary believer, his responsibility in the service of the truth is correspondingly greater. The 'prophetic' type of man is particularly associated by Solovyov with the faculty of believing, of *faith*. The positive value and the role of faith are explicitly reaffirmed in *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*, *Judaism and the Christian Question* and *The History and Future of Theocracy*. According to Solovyov, the Prophet is sustained by Divine grace and by his own faith in the ultimate triumph of the Good.

Solovyov died at the comparatively young age of forty-seven. He did not wholly overcome the conflicts within him. His tendency to seek logical, rational confirmation of revealed religious teachings could be seen in those particular lectures on Godmanhood dealing with the mystery of the Holy Trinity. It is common among critics

and other readers to juxtapose the poetry and the philosophy of Solovyov and to regard them as representing his intuitive and his rational sides respectively. However, I would argue that it is not necessary to turn to Solovyov's poetry to find expressions of his intuitive nature. The philosophical works and the theological works themselves contain valuable expressions of deeply and intuitively felt religious experience. His insights into the nature of asceticism are especially relevant in this connection, and these may prove among the most enduring features of his religious philosophy. Solovyov considered that religion enables man to attain his full and rightful stature; he further believed that Christianity in particular awakens in man the aspiration to *perfect* himself and to look to God for guidance and grace in this task of perfection. Spiritual growth is frequently presented, in the New Testament, as a radical transition from sickness to health and wholeness. The impaired faculties of the natural man are restored to their fullest and most intense power. For Solovyov, just as for Dostoevsky, the foundation and also the pre-condition of this growth is man's full acceptance of freedom and of moral responsibility.

Appendix I
Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov*

(In memory of Dr Nicolas M. Zernov, 1898–1980)

The volume and scope of critical and commentarial literature devoted to Dostoevsky's thought in the century since his death is clear evidence of the richness and complexity encountered in his works. In the figure of Vladimir Solovyov – both in his person and his writings – we also encounter a high degree of complexity. Tracing the patterns of his thought, we find certain tensions and a number of striking incongruities. Here was –

> a man who was, at heart, a monarchist, but aroused the anger and suspicions of the Tsar and Holy Synod through his advocacy of theocratic government; a man who embraced so much that was characteristic of the Slavophiles, and yet was a staunch supporter of their arch-enemy, Peter the Great;
> a man so seemingly keen to reaffirm the worth of contemplative spirituality, but who personally resisted the decision to join a monastery, a step that he at one time regarded as 'flight' from the world.

Those who knew Solovyov at first hand stressed what they regarded either as his sanctity or his eccentricity (his *chudachestvo*). Accounts of the excitement generated by his university lectures on philosophy certainly show that he commanded a surprising degree of authority and respect. On the other hand, Solovyov had to contend with numerous uncharitable gibes and with accusations to the effect that he had set himself up as a 'prophet'. Perhaps his best response to adverse criticism of this kind was to deflate his

*A Paper delivered at the VI Symposium of the International Dostoevsky Society, 9–16 August 1986, University of Nottingham. For Solovyov's and Dostoevsky's friendship and relations, see Chapter 2.

opponents' words by means of self-parody – a device to which he frequently resorted.

Problems of assessment are actually aggravated by the fact that, on occasion, one and the same feature of Solovyov's personality evoked entirely opposite responses in those who knew him. His very distinctive laughter was noted in the memoirs of numerous contemporaries: some accounts mention it as evidence of the philosopher's childlike simplicity and of his appreciative, accepting response to life. Vasiliy Rozanov, on the other hand, described Solovyov's laughter as 'manic' and even 'demonic', a 'hysterical' laughter that betrayed a man on the edge of despair. Reviewing the third volume of Solovyov's published correspondence, Rozanov took the loneliness and isolation expressed in those letters as likely contributing factors to an overall sense of failure and consequent despair. Rozanov speaks, even, of an 'icy mask' (*ledyanaya maska*) behind which the lonely philosopher hid, shielding himself as far as possible from any painful contact with the world.

The image of Solovyov as '*distant* from the world' is especially relevant. Most commentators who employed this image sought to invest it with *positive* connotations. In showing Solovyov as the rootless 'wanderer' (*strannik*) and homeless 'pilgrim', a man 'not of this world' (*ne ot mira sego*), they intended to convey that he was a mystic whose *sole* concern was to penetrate the secrets of the spiritual world. There is certainly a sense in which Solovyov belongs to the Russian tradition of 'God-seekers' (*bogoiskateli*), and to that extent the image of 'wanderer' and 'pilgrim' is both useful and telling. However, a close study of his life and writings establishes that the image of Solovyov as a mystic completely *apart* from the world is seriously misleading. His philosophy depended upon a *recognition* of the world's imperfections, hence the possibility of a comparison between him and Dostoevsky. Solovyov neither sought to shun the evils and suffering of earthly existence, nor valued the forms of spirituality that excluded recognition of these.

We can gauge what Solovyov valued most by noting the qualities that he praised in other thinkers. He believed that Dostoevsky exemplified certain of the greatest strengths of Christian thought and spirituality, and his praise of this author's insights and achievements represents one important facet of Solovyov's own extensive reaffirmation of Christian values.

Dostoevsky's and Solovyov's preoccupations may be considered

under five prominent and inter-related headings: those of faith, the Good, prophecy, *sobornost'* and active love.

In 1881, the year of Dostoevsky's death, and in the two subsequent years, Solovyov paid tribute to him in three speeches or lectures, published in his Collected Works under the title *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky* (*Tri rechi v pamyat' F. M. Dostoevskogo*). The second of these speeches contains a passage that brings together three of our themes – faith, the Good, and prophecy – and implicitly contains the notions of *sobornost'* and active love as well. The passage allows us to reflect upon Dostoevsky's Christian message, and also reveals much about the cast of Solovyov's mind, showing how he revered Dostoevsky not just in his own right, but as a 'spiritual type'. It is quite plain, in the three speeches, that Solovyov regarded Dostoevsky's spirituality as having a singularly beneficial and correct emphasis. The key passage reads as follows:

> Church-based and private Christianity is a reality – it is a *fact*. Universal Christianity is not as yet a reality: it is just a *task* [goal] to be achieved, and what a huge task, one that apparently goes beyond the capacities of man. As things stand at present, all the general affairs of men – politics, learning, art, social organisation – existing independent of any Christian principle, disrupt and divide people instead of uniting them, because all these affairs are conducted on the basis of egoism and personal gain, rivalry and struggle, and they breed oppression and violence. Such is reality, such is fact.
>
> But the merit and the whole significance of such people as Dostoevsky reside precisely in that they do not bow down before the force of fact and they do not serve that force. Set against this crude force of 'that which exists', they possess the spiritual force of faith in truth and goodness – in 'that which ought to exist'. Not to be led astray by the apparent domination of evil, and not to renounce the inapparent good on account of it, is a feat of faith. Man's entire strength resides in this. Whoever is incapable of this feat will achieve nothing and will have no word to address to humanity. Those people who acknowledge fact [alone] live by the grace of others, but it is not they who create life. It is the people of faith who *create life*. These are the people known as dreamers, utopians and holy fools – these are the prophets, truly the best people and the leaders of humanity. Today we commemorate such a person.

Solovyov was not the first to eulogise Dostoevsky and to view him as a prophet or visionary, but his observations place a singular emphasis upon *faith* and upon Dostoevsky's extraordinary capacity for faith. Solovyov had the opportunity to develop and expound his understanding of faith and prophecy in later works, such as his *The History and Future of Theocracy*. It should be noted, however, that all his subsequent statements are entirely consistent with the affirmation we find in the *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*, namely this: the Prophet is distinguished by the fact that, when confronted by the apparent domination of evil, he maintains faith in the ultimate victory of the Good. Solovyov certainly viewed Dostoevsky as representative of that special faith.

It may be helpful, at this point, to enumerate the main areas of agreement between Dostoevsky and Solovyov. Both men developed a messianic view in which Russia featured as the rightful guardian of authentic Christian values. Those values – they believed – require application both at the collective and individual levels. Failure to preserve Christian values would, in their view, result in the loss of *freedom*, in men's subjugation to purely utilitarian ideologies which ridicule the very notion of human autonomy. Both Dostoevsky and Solovyov were aware of the conflicting tendencies in the human will, towards self-assertion and self-denial. While both men associated *genuine* self-denial with spiritual health, it was Dostoevsky who – in his fiction – exposed the various ways in which the self-assertive will can convincingly simulate self-denial and undermine virtuous motives. This capacity of the self-assertive will to simulate its very opposite is also effectively suggested by Solovyov in his portrayal of the Antichrist in *A Short Story about Antichrist*. The philosopher and the novelist particularly coincide in their understanding of the destructive effects of alienation, isolation and individuation (*otchuzhdenie* and *obosoblenie*). Both men also agreed on the absolute centrality and importance of *moral responsibility*, linking this directly to men's temptation to displace God-man (*bogochelovek*) and to assert the rights of man-god (*chelovekobog*). One further important area of comparison is the prominence of *apocalyptic* thought in their overall conception of the world.

As regards the major differences between Dostoevsky and Solovyov, one may point to Solovyov's trust in *reason* and also to his greater optimism concerning the actual realization of the Kingdom of God on earth within the course and framework of human history.

Various biographers and commentators such as Ernest Radlov, Sergey Solovyov the philosopher's nephew, and Lev Shestov, have drawn attention to marked differences in character and temperament between the two men, which admirers of Solovyov have tended to overlook. What is especially noteworthy, if one considers all the available biographical evidence, is that in the very last years Dostoevsky appears to have moved towards greater equanimity, whereas in *his* last years Solovyov experienced and moved towards greater tension.

I believe that attempts to evaluate Dostoevsky's religious outlook risk distortion of his real position through excessive emphasis upon *otherworldliness*. It is true that we find the monk Zosima in *Brothers Karamazov* speaking the words

> Indeed, the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here but in other worlds.

However, to affirm that our thoughts and feelings are *rooted* in other worlds is *not* the same thing as outright denial of thoughts and feelings focused upon *this* world. But this is not easy to see when so much emphasis is placed upon the 'visionary' and 'mystical' aspects of Dostoevsky's outlook.

Here it is necessary to make a general point concerning visionaries and visionary types of mysticism, and this may facilitate a balanced reassessment both of Dostoevsky and Solovyov.

The great majority of men and women have no direct experience of visionary states or of otherwise heightened perceptions. But a certain number of them are prepared to concede that a few privileged individuals do indeed experience such higher states. The problem is that most of us assume too readily that *openness* to visions and other mystical states is somehow *incompatible* with an appreciation of ordinary day-to-day experience in the world and of ordinary events that take place there. As far as the majority of men perceive the matter, the mystic *may* experience so-called 'higher' states, but that capacity itself tends to blunt his awareness of day-to-day life and experience. In other words, the 'world' sees the mystic or visionary as an ivory-tower figure, privileged in one respect, but lacking in what is common to most men.

I would argue that such descriptions of the mystic or visionary can be seriously misleading. They ignore a feature of authentic and

balanced forms of mystical spirituality, which is this: in the light of his glimpse of the Transcendent, the believer's awareness and his perceptions of the world around him are significantly *heightened*, not diminished. It is *not* that he himself avoids, or is barred from, the world of common experience. It is his *values* that are 'not of this world', *'ne ot mira sego'*.

The striking feature in Dostoevsky is his combination of ultimate values with a disturbingly accurate understanding of his own age and of contemporary man. While the contemporary quality of his writings and thought attracts a great many readers who feel the force and accuracy of his diagnosis, it probably repels an equally great number of people precisely because his vision is too true, intense and painful for them to bear. The contemporary quality of Dostoevsky's writings is referred to by virtually all critics who have written about this author, and that is only to be expected. Nevertheless, this needs to be mentioned here precisely because *contemporaneity* is too seldom associated with writers whose perspective is religious or mystical

It is well known that Dostoevsky read newspapers in search of items that would serve as points of departure for his fiction and that expressed 'the spirit of the age'. *Crime and Punishment* was conceived on the basis of a newspaper report of a murder, and Dostoevsky's examination of Raskolnikov's motives sought to underline the plight of a man driven by the will to self-assertion. Raskolnikov, Golyadkin (the main character in *The Double*) and the Underground Man appal readers by the extent of their isolation, but it is precisely the problem of man's isolation that Dostoevsky sought to confront. He viewed that isolation and individuation as a real *measure* of men's 'loss of direction', and modern 'abstract' cities such as nineteenth-century Petersburg seemed to him to breed its most extreme results, veiled thinly behind murder statistics and figures on broken families, prostitution, drunkenness and chronic poverty.

At the far end of the spectrum from isolation and individuation stands *sobornost'*. *Sobornost'* is a central theme underlying the thought of Dostoevsky and Solovyov. It is an ideal standard of unanimity and community by which to measure all human relations. Dostoevsky and Solovyov both believed that, if followed in the true spirit, the Gospel teachings allow us to draw sufficiently close to that ideal standard to experience a deeply transformative reorientation of our human, initially self-assertive will.

Where isolation and discord are concerned, it may be said that Solovyov provides a philosophical and theological commentary on the situations enacted by Dostoevsky's fictional characters. In Solovyov's *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* we find the core idea succinctly expressed in the words

> The essence of the world's evil consists in the alienation and discord of all beings, in their mutual opposition and incompatibility.

Such constant depiction of discord as we get in Dostoevsky's writings, and notably in *The Possessed*, impels one to doubt whether there is any real scope, in his world, for the positive and healing effects of sanctity. It can almost be said that the burden of proof rests with the critic who wishes to establish Dostoevsky's acceptance of sanctity and the Good. However, we do know how seriously the author aspired to portray goodness, especially in the monk Zosima. We also know that he was keenly aware of the difficulties involved in the convincing portrayal of characters who display exemplary virtue and integrity. Various technical and other factors dictate that it is significantly easier to capture the reader's imagination through the portrayal of imperfect, flawed and evil characters. As far as Dostoevsky is concerned, I believe there are good grounds for accepting Professor S. A. Levitsky's description of him in *Sketches of the History of Russian Philosophical and Social Thought, (Ocherki po istorii russkoy filosofskoy i obshchestvennoy mysli,* 1968):

> In depicting suffering and evil, he [Dostoevsky] exposes evil through his own faith in the final victory of the Good.

It is this very belief in the final victory of the Good which Solovyov, in his three speeches on Dostoevsky, took to be the ultimate criterion in recognising the religious Prophet.

One tends to associate Solovyov's name, first and foremost, with Sophiology and with the study of esoteric Traditions such as the Cabbala, that is, with preoccupations that are, by their very nature, far-removed from the usual concerns of most men and women. While he would not deny the worth of insights afforded by such study, his goals were actually *practical* ones. He was mindful of the etymology of the word 'philosophy', and he understood wisdom to be practically applied knowledge with a moral basis. He believed,

in fact, that there was no longer any place in the modern world for *purely* theoretical knowledge; the Introduction to his very first published work *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* (*Krizis zapadnoy filosofii*, 1874) expresses his belief that abstract, purely theoretical knowledge had developed as far as it could and was now firmly relegated to the past.

In my examination of Solovyov's religious philosophy I have attempted to show the range of his activities: his impassioned defence of the Jews against officially condoned anti-Semitism, and his active stance against capital punishment and censorship. I have also examined in detail how Solovyov returned again and again to attack all forms of quietism and inaction. He discerned these tendencies in Byzantine society in particular: in his view, Byzantine society was only nominally Christian but actually pagan in its disregard for the values of community and active love preached in the Gospels. Solovyov's own life's work was to construct a philosophy that could accommodate those Christian values at its very centre.

Working towards his final affirmation of the values enshrined in the Gospels, Dostoevsky intended that the figure of Zosima should exemplify Christian sanctity, providing an adequate and 'living' response to Ivan Karamazov's atheism and – by extension – to the nihilism of the generation he represented. The success of Dostoevsky's endeavour has been a matter for continuing dispute. In *New Essays on Dostoevsky* (1983) Fr. Sergei Hackel presents a critical view, as suggested by the title 'The religious dimension: vision or evasion? Zosima's discourse in *Brothers Karamazov*'. While I accept the force of several points in this essay, I still differ from Fr. Hackel in that I regard the portrayal of Zosima as convincing. It seems to me that the merits of that portrayal of virtue have been very effectively brought out by Professor Stewart Sutherland in his book *Atheism and the Rejection of God* (1977). I would also commend Professor Sutherland's book for its very balanced treatment of the theme of *miracles* in *Brothers Karamazov*.

It has been argued (by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh and others) that Zosima is *not* representative of Orthodox piety, and that Dostoevsky errs on the side of sentimentality, as well as being on doctrinally dubious ground. Sergei Hackel concludes that there is a larger element of 'unbelief' in Dostoevsky's final vision than is normally recognised, but he does concede that the author of *Brothers Karamazov* showed definite signs of moving towards 'the

light'. I believe that in Dostoevsky we find much more than simply sincere aspirations and a defective grasp of Christian beliefs. In his last novel it is Mrs Khokhlakova who represents a false religiosity. The intended contrast is between her wishful, dreamy love (*mechtatel'naya lyubov'*) and Zosima's active love (*deyatel'naya lyubov'*). Even more central is the contrast between Zosima's respect for man, which allows for the possibility that man may eventually experience *sobornost'* or *community*, and, on the other hand, the Grand Inquisitor's contempt for man, from which follows his intended reduction of humanity to an obedient *herd*.

It may be that – like many other gifted individuals – both Dostoevsky and Solovyov preached certain ideas that need to be treated with caution. However, they come closest to the mainstream of Christian Tradition in their various affirmations of the worth of *active love*. Indeed, they promoted and defended the very values that give the spiritual endeavour positive justification, and they placed the emphasis firmly upon self-conquest. This in itself is a major contribution. They each stressed spiritual *aspiration* (*stremlenie*), and it is for this reason that Dostoevsky went to such lengths to investigate the impulses that undermine virtue and negate aspiration. Solovyov approached this range of questions directly through philosophy and theology, Dostoevsky through his fictional portrayal of nineteenth-century man. Their desideratum appears to have been this: man as a moral and self-reflective being who, of his own free choice, fully respecting the autonomy of others, works actively towards the transformation of his entire community, in accordance with the precepts of the New Testament. The ideal image of man which they present is of man as endowed with God-given grace and therefore capable of discernment and judicious action which, together, amount to an *active charity*. That, in turn, requires – on man's part – motivation that is benevolent: not sentimental and self-regarding, but well-directed and efficacious.

Appendix II
Solovyov's Poem 'Panmongolism'

For the sake of English readers I provide a working translation of the poem 'Panmongolism', the content of which is so important for an understanding of Solovyov's later views on religion, Christian culture and world history. I do no more than convey the content of the poem, and therefore my translation appears in prose form.

Panmongolism! Although the name is savage, Its sound is sweet to me, As if it were filled with the portent, Of a great Divine destiny.

When in corrupt Byzantium, The sacred altar grew cold, The people and prince, the priest and ruler Denied the Messiah,

Then an unknown and alien people Arose from the East, And the Second Rome was cast to the ground, Dealt a crushing blow by harsh fate.

We do not want to learn From the fate of fallen Byzantium, And all Russia's flatterers repeat: 'You are the Third Rome, you are the Third Rome'.

What is one to say? The weapons of divine punishment Are not yet exhausted. A swarm of emergent tribes is preparing to inflict new blows.

From Malayan shores to the Altai, Tribal leaders from Eastern isles Have gathered the dark masses of their troops By rebellious China's walls.

As numerous and insatiable as locusts, These tribes march north, Protected from on high.

Oh, Rus'! Forget your former glory. The two-headed eagle is crushed, and fragments of the nation's banners Are given to yellow-skinned children for their play. That nation, which could forget the testament of love, Now submits in fear and trembling, And the Third Rome lies in ashes; There will be no fourth . . .

Notes

CHAPTER 1: THE STUDY OF MYSTICAL THOUGHT – METHODOLOGY

1. Karel Werner, 'On Unity and Diversity in the Interpretation of Mysticism', *Religious Traditions*, (Australia: University of La Trobe, 1981) vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 65–71. Dr Werner considers some contemporary discussions of religious experience and problems regarding its describability in this review article about *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, edited by Steven Katz (London: Sheldon Press, 1978).
2. C. A. Bennett, *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism* (Yale University Press, 1923) p. 27.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 26.
5. J. Leclercq, F. Vandenbrouke and L. Bouyer, *History of Christian Spirituality*, Part II, ch. 6: 'German Spirituality in the Fourteenth Century', (London: Burns Oates, 1968) pp. 373–4. Original French edition: *Histoire de la Spiritualité Chrétienne* (1961) pp. 448–9.
6. See *Traditional Modes of Contemplation and Action*, edited by Y. Ibish (Imperial University of Teheran, 1976, and published in Britain by Allen & Unwin, 1976). Papers from a colloquium held in Texas in 1973.
7. E. Conze, 'Spurious Parallels to Buddhist Philosophy', in his collection of articles *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, (Oxford, 1967) pp. 229–42.
8. Ibid., pp. 239–40.
9. Ibid., p. 241.
10. George Steiner, 'The Retreat from the Word' in his collection of essays *Language and Silence* (London: Peregrine Books, 1979) p. 31. This collection contains essays from 1958 to 1966 and was first published by Faber & Faber in 1967. 'The Retreat from the Word' was written in 1961.
11. Karel Werner, 'On Interpreting the Vedas', *Religion*, (Lancaster), vol. VII (autumn 1977) p. 195.
12. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, (Oxford University Press, 1980) p. 4. First English edition, 1923; original German edition: *Das Heilige*, 1917.
13. Ibid., p. 31.
14. Ibid., p. 33.
15. Ibid., p. 60.
16. Pratima Bowes, *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) pp. 283–4, from ch. 8: 'Truth and the Hindu Religious Tradition'. Students of religion would benefit greatly from

a close reading of this particular chapter in this generally informative book.

17. On *Brautmystik*: see Leclercq, Vandenbrouke and Bouyer *History of Christian Spirituality* (London: Burns Oates, 1968) pp. 374–6 *passim*.
18. Ibid., p. 93 (p. 120 in the French edition, 1961).
19. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1957, reprinted in 1973) p.42. See also pp. 38–9 and 43. Originally this book was published in Paris (1944) under the title *Essai sur la Théologie Mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*.
20. Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie Négative et Connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris, 1960: No. 48 in the *'Etudes de Philosophie Médiévale'* series, published by *Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin*) p. 199. This is an extremely penetrating study of the subject.
21. Ibid., pp. 212–13. The context in which many of these statements were made is that of a theological dispute between Meister Eckhart and certain Franciscan scholars over the primacy of the Will (a notion accepted by the Franciscans) or the primacy of the Intellect.
22. Ibid., p. 315.
23. Surendranath Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975) vol. IV, p. 126. First edition: Cambridge, 1922.
24. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1973) p. 42. For Solovyov's observations on Negative Theology, see Collected Works of Vladimir Solovyov (Brussels, *Foyer Oriental Chrétien*, 1966) vol. IX, p. 17.
25. T. M. P. Mahadevan, 'Vedāntic Meditation and its Relation to Action' in *Traditional Modes of Contemplation and Action*, edited by Y. Ibish, (Imperial University of Teheran/Allen & Unwin, 1976) pp. 354–55. For the entire article, see pp. 349–59.

CHAPTER 2: THE LIFE AND CAREER OF VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

1. Konstantin Mochulsky, *Vladimir Solovyov: His Life and Teaching (Vladimir Solovyov: zhizn' i uchenie)*, (Paris: YMCA Press, 1936; second edition 1951); Sergey Solovyov, *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov (Zhizn' i tvorcheskaya evolyutsiya Vladimira Solovyova)*, (Brussels, *Foyer Oriental Chrétien*, 1977). The original manuscript of this second work, written in 1923, is held in the archive of Sergey Solovyov (1885–?1941) at the Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TSGALI), Moscow, and was not published until 1977. (TSGALI, *Op.*I, *Fond* 475, *ed. khr.* 17 & 18).
2. Msgr Michel d'Herbigny, Vladimir Soloviev: *Un Newman russe* (Paris, 1918); English edition: *Vladimir Soloviev: A Russian Newman*.
3. N. O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, (London 1952). ch. 8: Vladimir Solovyov. This book also contains useful chapters on some of the principal theologians and philosophers influenced by Solovyov such as Sergey Bulgakov.
4. Georgiy Chulkov, *'Poeziya Vladimira Solovyova'*, in *Voprosy Zhizni*,

1905, nos 4–5. pp. 101–17. See the chapter entitled '*O Sophianstve*' in his book *O misticheskom anarkhizme* (1906), a modern edition of which is published by Prideaux Press, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. For Solovyov, see Prideaux Press edition, pp. 21–44; Alexey Remizov, '*Filosofskaya natura. Vladimir Solovyov – zhenikh*' (1938), as cited in D. Sinay's *Bibliographie de Remizov*, (Paris, Institut d'Etudes Slaves); Thomas G. Masaryk, *Die geistigen Strömungen in Russland*, 2 vols (Jena 1913; English editions 1919 and 1955). See *The Spirit of Russia*, 1955 edition, vol. II, ch. 17.

5. *The Spirit of Russia*, vol. II, p. 277.
6. Paul M. Allen, *Vladimir Soloviev: Russian Mystic* (Blauvelt, New York: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1978).
7. Vladimir Solovyov, '*Sergey Mikhailovich Solovyov: Neskol'ko dannykh dlya ego kharakteristiki*'. See Collected Works of Vladimir Solovyov (Brussels, *Foyer Oriental Chrétien* edition, 1966) vol. VII, pp. 354–73. (Hereafter this edition of Solovyov's Collected Works will be referred to simply as 'Works', and all page references will be given for this edition.) This article on Vladimir Solovyov's father was first published in June 1896 in the journal *The European Herald* (*Vestnik Evropy*) pp. 689–708.
8. Sergey Solovyov (the younger), *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 51; see also Mochulsky's observations regarding the relationship between father and son, (second edition 1951) pp. 12–14.
9. Sergey Solovyov, p. 38; see also p. 33.
10. Collected Works of Grigoriy S. Skovoroda, published in Kharkov in 1894, edited by D. E. Bagaley. See also: S. Lavretsky, *The Ukrainian Philosopher Grigoriy Savvich Skovoroda.* (*Ukrainskiy filosof Grigoriy Savvich Skovoroda*), 1894; and V. Ern, *Grigoriy Savvich Skovoroda: His Life and Teaching*, (*Grigoriy Savvich Skovoroda: zhizn' i uchenie*), 1912.
11. Works, vol. XII, pp. 80–6.
12. See the journal *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology*, (*Voprosy filosofii i psyikhologii*) (1901) no. 1, p. 90. This entire issue of the journal was devoted to obituary articles in honour of Vladimir Solovyov.
13. Vasiliy Rozanov, '*Na panikhide Vladimira Solovyova*', in his *By the Church Walls* (*Okolo tserkovnykh sten*), vol. I, pp. 240–1.
14. See autobiographical observations of Vladimir Solovyov cited by Sergey Solovyov in *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 58.
15. S. M. Luk'yanov, On Vl. S. Solovyov in his Young Years, (*O Vl. S. Solovyove v ego molodye gody*) (Petrograd, 1916) vol. I, p. 313.
16. Letters of Vladimir Solovyov (referred to hereafter as 'Letters') vol. III, p. 105 (a letter to E. K. Selevina, *née* Romanova). Solovyov's correspondence was edited by E. L. Radlov (editor of the Collected Works) and published in four volumes between 1908 and 1923. The modern edition of the Letters contains all the philosopher's known correspondence in a single volume, published by *Foyer Oriental Chrétien* (Brussels, 1970).

17. Mochulsky, p. 42.
18. Op.cit., p. 91. Solovyov's letters to his cousin Katya Romanova (E. K. Selevina when married) are to be found in Letters, vol. III, pp. 56–106.
19. Vasiliy L. Velichko, *Vladimir Solovyov: His Life and Works* (*Vladimir Solovyov: zhizn' i tvoreniya*) (Petersburg, 1902) p. 181.
20. Mochulsky, p. 65; see also Luk'yanov, vol. III, p. 138.
21. Works, vol. I, pp. 27–151. First published serially in *The Orthodox Review* (*Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*), 1874, Nos 1,3,5,9,10.
22. Luk'yanov, vol. III, pp. 360–1. Mochulsky holds that Solovyov became disillusioned with spiritualism quite quickly, see pp. 64–5. See also Sergey Solovyov, pp. 121–22.
23. The sub-title of his Master's Thesis *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* was 'Against the Positivists', (*Protiv Pozitivistov*).
24. See Sergey Solovyov, pp. 297–8; Lev Shestov, '*Umozrenie i apokalipsis*' (1927), in Shestov's collection of essays entitled *Umozrenie i otkrovenie*, (Paris: YMCA Press, 1964) p. 29. Radlov also provides some perceptive observations regarding differences between Solovyov and Dostoevsky in his article '*Solovyov i Dostoevsky*' in *F. M. Dostoevsky – Stat'i i materialy*, edited by A. S. Dolynin (1922) pp. 155–72.
25. *Letters of F. M. Dostoevsky* (Moscow edition, 1959) vol. IV, pp. 27,29,33. Here Dostoevsky mentions the visit to Optina Pustyn' with Solovyov, but does not elaborate on what happened during the two days spent there. (Two of these letters were addressed to his wife Anna Grigorievna, June 1878, and one to L. V. Grigoriev, July 1878); Dostoevsky's wife mentions the visit in her *Memoirs* (*Vospominaniya, Seriya literaturnykh memoirov*, 1971) pp. 322–3; see also I. M. Kontsevich, *Optina Pustyn' i eë vremya*, (published by Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York, 1970) pp. 597–9; John Dunlop, *Staretz Amvrosy* (London/Oxford: Mowbrays, 1975) pp. 58–60. This last work is a short biography of the monk and spiritual teacher whose advice and consolation Dostoevsky went to seek, and who served as one model for the fictional starets Zosima in *Brothers Karamazov*.
26. Sergey Solovyov, pp. 41, 199–200.
27. A. G. Dostoevskaya, *Vospominaniya* pp. 254–5. this passage refers to late 1873, when Vladimir Solovyov first met Dostoevsky.
28. Works, vol. I, pp. 250–406 and vol. II, pp 3–397.
29. Luk'yanov, vol. II, pp. 136–40. Sergey Solovyov, pp. 192–3.
30. In particular, Solovyov criticised the arguments put forward in N. Danilevsky's book *Russia and Europe* (*Rossiya i Evropa*) (1871). See V. Solovyov, Works, vol. V, pp. 132, 133, 137–8 *passim*. This criticism of Danilevsky's theories on race and culture appears in Solovyov's *The National Question in Russia*, for which see note 31.
31. V. Solovyov, *The National Question in Russia*, (*Natsional'niy vopros v Rossii*), Collected articles of 1883–1891: see Works, vol. V, pp. 3–401. For Solovyov's views on the national question and especially his criticism of exclusive nationalism, see pp. 3, 13, 24–5, 43, 47, 53, 56, 71–2, 103, 158–9.

32. A. F. Koni, *Pamyati Vladimira Solovyova* (a commemorative speech delivered in Jan. 1901, publ. in 1903) p.3
33. Letters, vol. III, p. 138 (a letter to Fr. P. Pierling).
34. Works, vol. IV, pp. 243–633.
35. Among Russians who found this work valuable and interesting was the author Nikolai Leskov (1831–95): see *L. N. Tolstoy: Correspondence with Russian Writers* (*L. N. Tolstoy: Perepiska s russkimi pisatelyami*) Moscow, 1962; N. Leskov, letter to Tolstoy, 20 Jan. 1891, p.531.
36. Vladimir Solovyov, *L'Idée russe* (written in French by Solovyov), (Paris: *Librairie Academique Didier-Perrin*,1888). Russian translation by G. A. Rachinsky, see Collected Works of Vladimir Solovyov, vol. XI, pp. 89–118.
37. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, 1889. I have used the third edition (1922), published in Paris by *Delamain Boutelleau et Cie*. Russian translation by G. A. Rachinsky, Collected Works of Vladimir Solovyov, vol. XI, pp. 139–348.
38. On 28 November 1892 Solovyov wrote to Rozanov explaining that *all* forms of narrowness (Catholic or other) were alien to him; he professed the 'broad' 'religion of the Holy Spirit' (Letters, vol.III, pp. 43–4).
39. Letters, Vol. III, p. 172 (a letter to the editors of the newspaper *Novoe Vremya*, Nov. 1886).
40. Ibid., p. 189 (a letter to Archimandrite Antoniy Vadkovsky, 29 Nov., 1886.)
41. Ibid., p. 138 (a letter to Fr. Pierling, 31 Jan., 1887); see also Sergey Solovyov, p.217.
42. A. F. Koni, p.5
43. Although her name is given as E. K. Selevina in the Letters, her name and patronymic was Ekaterina Vladimirovna. See Sergey Solovyov, pp. 75–7.
44. Alexey Remizov, *'Filosofskaya natura. Vladimir Solovyov – zhenikh'*, (1938), See note 4, above.
45. Letters, vol. III, p.81.
46. See Sergey Solovyov's Introduction to the fifth edition of Vladimir Solovyov's poems, 1904.
47. Works, vol. VII, pp. 3–60.
48. Works, vol. VIII, pp. 3–516, vol. IX, pp. 194–241 and vol. X, pp. 83–221 respectively.
49. Zinaida Minz, 'From the History of the Polemic involving Lev Tolstoy: L. Tolstoy and Vl. Solovyov', (*Iz istorii polemiki vokrug L'va Tolstogo: L. Tolstoy i Vl. Solovyov*), in *Trudy po russkoy i slavyanskoy filologii*, University of Tartu, 1966. For further treatment of the polemical dispute between Solovyov and Tolstoy, see my Chapter 6. See also Mochulsky, pp. 248–50 and especially p.256, where he suggests that in Tolstoy Solovyov recognised his own former self, and that Tolstoy adopted ideas that had once attracted Solovyov.
50. Mochulsky, p. 245; Sergey Solovyov, pp. 364–66, esp. p. 365.

51. An English translation of this work is now available, translated by W. J. Barnes and H. H. Haynes, and published by Floris Books, Edinburgh, 1982.
52. Sergey Solovyov, p. 398.
53. Ibid., p. 389.

CHAPTER 3: TRADITION, SCHOLARSHIP AND PRACTICAL WISDOM

1. Karel Werner, *Yoga and Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977) p. 96.
2. Works, vol.XII, p.23. The dark side of Solovyov's nature is referred to by Mochulsky (p.226), who also quotes the poet Andrey Bely's description of Solovyov as he appeared in Spring, 1900, the year of his death. In his *Arabesques* (*Arabeski* -Moscow 1911) Bely, who attended a reading of part of Solovyov's *Three Conversations*, mentioned the spiritual quality of the philosopher's eyes and the sensuality of his mouth; cited by Mochulsky, pp. 260–1.
3. Works, vol. IV, p. 243.
4. Letters, vol. III, pp. 88–9.
5. See a passage on this subject from *A Critique of Abstract Principles*, Works, vol. II, pp. 116–21.
6. Works, III, 25.
7. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 353. This work first appeared in serial form in *The Orthodox Review* (*Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*) (1884) nos 1–3, and a separate edition appeared in the same year under the title *The Religious Foundations of Life* (*Religioznye osnovy zhizni*).
8. Nikolai O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, (London, 1952) p. 95. Chapter 8 of this book is devoted to Solovyov's philosophy.
9. *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (*Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniya*), Works, vol. I, p. 316.
10. See, for instance, Solovyov's 1898 lecture 'The Idea of Humanity according to Auguste Comte', (*Ideya chelovechestva u Avgusta Konta*), Works, vol. IX, pp. 172–93. The lecture was delivered on 7 Mar. 1898 at an open meeting of the Philosophical Society at Petersburg University, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Comte's birth.
11. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Selected Papers*, 2 vols (vol. I: Traditional Art and Symbolism; vol. II: Metaphysics), (Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXXIX, 1977). This edition of papers by Coomaraswamy commemorates the centenary of his birth and was edited by Dr Roger Lipsey, who also wrote a biography to accompany these papers (vol. III). See also Coomaraswamy's *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956) and *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Harvard University Press, 1934 and Dover Publications, 1956); and Jonathan Sutton, 'Meaning and Symbolism in the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy', *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, (University of Peradeniya,

1981) vol. VII, nos 1 & 2, pp. 1–28. This was first read as a paper at the 7th Symposium on Indian Religions, in Oxford, 3–5 Apr. 1981.

12. Nikolai Berdyaev, *Smysl istorii* (Berlin, 1923, second edition Paris: YMCA Press, 1969); English translation by George Reavey, *The Meaning of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1936). YMCA Press edition, see pp. 29–54, Geoffrey Bles edition, pp. 21–43.
13. *The Meaning of History*, p. 26. And see further, pp. 26–35.
14. Ibid., p. 31.
15. See especially Solovyov's *China and Europe* (*Kitai i Evropa*), (1890) Works vol. VI, pp. 93–150.
16. Coomaraswamy was especially concerned with authentic iconography and with the function of iconographic (rather than representational) works of art as 'supports of contemplation'. It is these ideas above all that informed Coomaraswamy's thinking.
17. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, reprinted in 1974) pp. 66–7.
18. Ibid., pp. 65–6.
19. Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London, Rider and Co. 1962; second edition 1969) p. 75.

CHAPTER 4: THE CENTRAL TEACHINGS OF SOLOVYOV – I

1. On active love, see Appendix I: 'Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov'. I have not undertaken a special analysis of Solovyov's work *The Meaning of Love* (1892), but my whole discussion of contemplative spirituality, active spirituality and quietism (especially in Chapter 8) recognises the centrality of active love in Solovyov's worldview. In his book *The Religion of Dostoevsky* (London, SCM Press, 1973), A. Boyce Gibson provides a perceptive observation about active love that is applicable both to Dostoevsky's and Solovyov's conceptions of it:

   > . . . Active love, though it does not depend on reason – *rassudok* – nevertheless incapsulates a reason of its own. It is a sorting out of the human person in which the initiative of the individual is maintained and its self-seeking separateness is overcome.
   >
   > (p. 207)

2. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 301.
3. *Lectures on Godmanhood* (third lecture), see Works, vol. III, pp. 42–4, and *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, pp. 306–10. This second work is available in English translation, under the title *God, Man and the Church*, translated by Donald Attwater (Cambridge: James Clarke 1938: reprinted in 1973).
4. Op. cit.
5. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works III, p. 310 (in the Introduction to Part I of this work).
6. Ibid., p. 310.
7. Works, III, 44, 309–10. Prince Evgeniy Trubetskoy, who was in so many respects a quite severe critic of Solovyov's ideas, entirely

endorsed the Solovyovian view of this subject in the opening passage of his insufficiently recognised book *Thought in Colours – Three Sketches concerning the Russian Icon* (*Umozrenie v kraskakh: tri ocherka o russkoy ikone*), 1916–1917. Russian language edition: Paris: YMCA Press 1965; English translation: *Icons: Theology in Colour* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press).

8. *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, p. 10. This work exists in English, French and German translations: English translation by Natalie A. Duddington, 1918.
9. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Book II ch. 7. Solovyov stresses that the Romans founded their empire on the basis of force, but they were in some sense an instrument of God's Will, for they created the conditions which allowed Christianity to thrive: the Romans' *universalism* gave way to Christian *universalism based on love*. Solovyov even took it as indicative that ROMA when reversed spells AMOR, love. See *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle* (1922 edition) pp. 134–43; Works, vol. XI, pp. 241–6. This work also exists in English translation, translated by Herbert Rees (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948).
10. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, p. 138; Works, vol. XI, 243.
11. *Lectures on Godmanhood* (first lecture), Works, vol. III, pp. 5–7. (English translation by Peter Zouboff, London, 1948).
12. Ibid., 7–9.
13. Ibid., (text of eleventh and twelfth lectures) p. 164.
14. Ibid., p. 164.
15. *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, (1883), Works, vol. IV, pp. 42–3. Published in the journal *Rus'* (1883).
16. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, (third lecture) pp. 41–4.
17. Ibid., p.48; *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, pp. 68 and 256–66 (Part III, ch. 11).
18. *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* (1874), Works, vol. I; see also John Palan, *The Theory of Religious Knowledge of Vladimir Solovyov*, D. Phil. thesis, Oxford 1976.
19. *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, Works, vol. I, pp. 60–1 and esp. 133–5.
20. *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, Works, vol. IV, 98–9.
21. Ibid., pp. 100, 102.
22. 'About the Schism in the Russian Nation and Society', (*O raskole v russkom narode i obshchestve*), (1882–83), Works, vol. III, pp. 245–80, see esp. pp. 253–5.
23. Ibid., p. 252.
24. Ibid., pp. 250–251.
25. Ibid., p. 253. 'Containing in itself the seed of Protestantism, the [Russian] Schism cultivated it to its ultimate point'. See also p. 252).
26. Ibid., p. 252; *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 71–2 and ff.
27. Works, vol. I, pp. 250–406; Works, vol. II, pp. 3–397. *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* was originally published in *The Journal of the Ministry of Education*, (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo*

Prosveshcheniya) between March and November 1877; *A Critique of Abstract Principles* was first published serially in *The Russian Herald* (*Russkiy Vestnik*) between 1877 (nos 11 and 12) and 1880 (no. 1).

28. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 353.
29. Paul Hayner, *Reason and Existence: Schelling's Philosophy of History* (Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1967).
30. Op.cit., pp. 406, 410, 412, 413,414.
31. Works, vol. XII, p. 84.
32. Ibid., p. 88.
33. *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*, Works, vol. III, p. 201.
34. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 168.
35. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, pp. 14, 15.
36. See *Philosophical Principles of integral Knowledge*, Works, vol. I, pp. 264, 289–92.
37. See Solovyov's Preface to *A Critique of Abstract Principles*, Works, vol. II, pp. v–xi, esp. p. x. What Solovyov had to say about the undesirable effects of specialisation and the compartmentalisation of knowledge holds even more true today than it did in the late nineteenth century.
38. Works, I, p. 27

CHAPTER 5: THE CENTRAL TEACHINGS OF SOLOVYOV – II

1. See Dom Christopher Butler's observations on *perfectibility*, in his article 'Soloviev', *Downside Review*, 1932, vol. 50 (New Series) pp. 57–9.
2. The aspiration towards perfection is the theme of Gregory of Nyssa's celebrated work *The Life of Moses*. Gregory of Nyssa's writings were familiar to Solovyov, and were quoted frequently by him as a source of authoritative insights into the spiritual life.
3. Vladimir Solovyov, 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it', Works, vol. VI, pp. 28–9.
4. Ibid., pp. 29–30. See also note 28, below.
5. *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*, Works, vol. III, p. 201.
6. Works, vol. VII, p. 299.
7. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 148–9.
8. Ibid., pp. 149–50, esp. p. 150: '. . .thus, the three chief qualities of the Jewish people in their combined action directly corresponded to the high destiny of this people and made possible the fulfilment of God's work in it. . . . Through the purification of material nature, Israel prepared within itself a pure and sacred abode for the incarnation of God the Word.' See how closely these lines correspond with the ideas expressed by Friedrich von Huegel (1852–1925) in his authoritative *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, (London: Dent, 1921). Von Huegel writes:

> . . . Now it was most appropriate that the Incarnation, for purposes of religion, should take place in Jewish human nature, since the Jewish people had, already for some thirteen centuries,

> furnished forth amongst mankind the purest light and strongest leading in religion. Thus . . . the Revealer could not but imagine, think, feel and will the deepest truths and facts of His mission with Jewish categories, images, emotions.
>
> (pp. 125–6)

9. Works, vol. IV, pp. 157–8. '. . . And for Christianity the *higher* goal is not [contained] in an ascetical denial of natural life, but in the purification and sanctification of this life' (p. 157).
10. See the preface to *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 302.
11. Ibid., p. 312.
12. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 157.
13. Op.cit., p. 201 (*Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*).
14. See Professor Andrzej Walicki's excellent account of the evolution in Solovyov's views on law: 'Vladimir Solov'ev and the Legal Philosophies of Russian Liberalism' in *Russian Thought and Society, 1800–1917: Essays in Honour of Eugene Lampert*, edited by Roger Bartlett (University of Keele, 1984) pp. 153–80.
15. Ernest L. Radlov, *Vl.S. Solovyov: His Life and Teaching* (*Vl. S. Solovyov: zhizn' i uchenie*), (Petersburg, 1913) p. 162.
16. Ibid., p. 163.
17. See fourth of the *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, pp. 48–58, esp. pp. 52–4, and fifth lecture, especially pp. 74–5.
18. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, pp. 323–4.
19. Op.cit., pp. 42–4 (*Lectures on Godmanhood*).
20. *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*, Works, vol. VI, p. 391.
21. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1973 edition) p. 224.
22. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, pp. 345-6.
23. Ibid., p. 348.
24. Ibid., pp. 345–7. Significantly, here Solovyov's observations come under the general heading of *abstention*; in this passage particularly he writes of the need for man's *non-exploitative* relation to the natural environment, a message that is all the more urgent in our age of advanced technology, where natural resources are often wasted irresponsibly and on a massive scale that makes restoration almost impossible. Our awareness of the dangers of this irresponsible treatment of the environment has come very late indeed, and vested interests of industrialists and human greed may still win over responsibly-minded protectors of the natural environment.
25. Ibid., p. 346.
26. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 149.
27. Ibid., pp. 148 & 149.
28. Works, vol. VI, pp. 28–32. This passage contains the germ of an idea that was expressed five years later (1891) in his celebrated lecture *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*. (See Chapter 8 for an examination of that lecture). Here, in the present article, Solovyov

suggests tentatively that real and effective social reform in Christian countries coincided with a significant *decline* in religious belief. That idea, when developed more fully in the 1891 lecture, caused much anger and adverse comment in Russian society and government circles.

29. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 157–8.
30. Vol. 2, p. 73.
31. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 149: 'The feast of the Transfiguration, so venerated by the Orthodox Church, serves as a key to the understanding of the humanity of Christ in the Eastern tradition. This never considers the humanity of Christ in abstraction, apart from His Godhead, whose fullness dwells in Him bodily.'
32. Ibid., p. 221.
33. Ibid., p. 223.
34. Ibid., pp. 220 & 221.
35. The Gospel of St. Luke, 9, 30–1. In the episode of the Transfiguration, the unique status of Christ is conveyed not only by the transfiguration of His body with uncreated light, but also by the acknowledgement of His status by Moses and Elijah.
36. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 345. the essential unity and coherence of the cosmos centred around Christ and His Church is powerfully conveyed by Prince Evgeniy Trubetskoy in the first of his three sketches concerning the Russian icon *Thought in Colours* (*Umozrenie v kraskakh*, 1916) (Paris: YMCA Press, 1965) pp. 39–43.
37. Works, vol. XII, p. 23.
38. Ibid., p. 80. See *The Silver Age of Russian Culture* (Ardis, 1975) for Ralph Koprince's translation.
39. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 168.
40. Works, vol. III, pp. 48–9 (fourth lecture).
41. Ibid., p. 48. See also p. 116 (seventh lecture).
42. Ibid., 48–9.
43. Ibid., p. 49. See also p. 113 (seventh lecture) where this point is reaffirmed.
44. Ibid., p. 49.
45. Ibid., p. 164 (text of eleventh and twelfth lectures).
46. Ibid., p. 165.
47. See the section in this chapter on *Transfiguration*.
48. Op.cit., pp. 163–4.
49. Ibid., p. 165.
50. Ibid., p. 164.
51. Ibid., p. 163.
52. Ibid., p. 25.
53. Ibid. See also pp. 164–5.
54. Works, p.84.
55. Works, vol. III, p. 165.
56. Op.cit., p. 34.
57. Works, vol. III, pp. 79–102 and 103–19.

58. Ibid., pp. 103–4.
59. Ibid., see pp. 106–11.
60. Ibid., pp. 110–11.
61. Ibid., see pp. 107–11.
62. Ibid., pp. 109–10.
63. Works, vol. I, pp. 256–64, 373, 378.
64. Ibid., p. 289.
65. Ibid., p. 289.
66. See Chapter 8.
67. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, pp. 265–8; in Russian translation see Works, vol. XI, pp. 311–13.
68. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, pp. 306–10, and *The History and Future of Theocracy*, works, vol. IV, pp. 258–9.
69. Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1936) p. 67.
70. Ibid., pp. 21–43, esp. p.26. Also see pp. 2–3, 14, 16–18.
71. Ibid., pp. 36–7.
72. Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge – Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St. John of the Cross*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979, reprinted in 1981) pp. 44–5.
73. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, vol. III, p. 403.
74. Ibid., p. 403. See also p. 165 (*Lectures on Godmanhood*).
75. See esp. his article 'Three Forces' (*Tri sily*), (1877), Works, vol. I, pp. 227–39. Solovyov criticises the extreme rigidity of Islamic society and its suppression of the needs of the individual (see pp. 230–1). He also criticises the extreme *individualism* apparent in West European society, its fragmentation, and its lack of internal, organic unity (see pp. 231–7). The ideal synthesis which allows for social cohesion *and* satisfaction of the needs of the individual would, argues Solovyov, be provided by the third (emergent) force in world history, namely the Slavs and especially the Russian people. It is they who, according to the young Solovyov, are free of the faults evident in the societies of Islām and Western Europe, the first two 'forces' in world history (pp. 237–-9).
76. Works, vol. III, p.407.
77. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 163–4.
78. *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, Works, vol. IV, p.33.
79. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, p. 165, and *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 150.
80. The whole of Part I of *Judaism and the Christian Question* is devoted to discussion of this matter, Works, vol. IV, pp. 142–50. See also Chapter 5 of Berdyaev's *The Meaning of History*, 'The Destiny of the Jews', pp. 86–107. See especially p. 88: 'A comparison between the Jewish religion and that of other pre-Christian pagans confirms the contention that Jewish history represented the revelation of God in the historical destiny of humanity, while that of other pagan peoples represented the revelation of God in nature'. Also, p. 103: 'The Jewish people, animated by an intense feeling for history and aspiring towards the future, was destined to give birth to

Christianity and bring about the central event of universal history, the revelation of the two worlds, immanent and transcendental.'

81. Works, vol. III, pp. 163–71.
82. Preface to *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 260–1.
83. Op.cit., pp. 111–12.
84. Works, vol. III, p. 314. On the subject of *self-denial* Solovyov writes:

> The source of all man's actions is his will. Thus, the barrier separating [him] from the essential good, or God, is the will of man. But with this very will man can decide not to act on his own or the world's part, not to proceed according to his own and the world's will. Man can decide: "I do not want my own will". Such self-denial or direction of the human will is its greatest triumph.

85. The Gospel of St. Luke, 20, 25.
86. See Appendix I; 'Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov'.
87. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Book III, pp. 254–5. In Russian translation, see Works, vol. XI, pp. 304–5. See also *Justification of the Good*, Part II, ch. 9, in Works, vol. VIII, pp. 213–16.
88. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, p. 165. It is to be noted that Solovyov refers to Christianity – with its teaching on the Incarnation of the God-man Jesus Christ – as the *end point* and *summation* (*konets i zavershenie*) of the cosmic process. See *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 158.
89. See Paul C. Hayner, *Reason and Existence: Schelling's Philosophy of History* (Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1967).
90. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, p. 58: 'Without His [God's] will or longing for freedom, no world process would be possible. In its place there would be a static and pre-eminently perfect Kingdom of God as an essential and predetermined harmony.'
91. Hayner, p. 45; see also pp. 111, 114–15.
92. Ibid., p. 143.
93. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 403.
94. Ibid., p. 314.
95. Works, vol. X, p. 246.
96. *Lectures on Godmanhood* (seventh lecture), Works, vol. III, p. 114.
97. Op.cit., pp. 246 & 247.
98. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Part III, ch. 4, p. 236; Works, vol. XI, p. 295.
99. *Lectures on Godmanhood* (second lecture), Works, vol. III, p.25.
100. Ibid., p. 163 (text of eleventh and twelfth lectures).
101. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 258.
102. Ibid., p. 259.
103. Ibid., p. 259.
104. Ibid., pp. 260–1.
105. Eleventh edition, vol. XXVI, p. 760.
106. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (Edinburgh, 1925, edited by James Hastings), vol. 12, see pp. 287–9.

107. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 156, 163.
108. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Goverment*, (New Haven, USA: American Oriental Society, 1942). I have undertaken a special examination of this eighty-five-page monograph and of the symbolism associated with theocratic rule in my 'Meaning and Symbolism in the work of Ananda Coomaraswamy', *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka), (1981) vol. VII, nos 1 & 2, pp. 1–28, see esp. pp. 13–28.
109. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 508.
110. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, Vol. IV, p. 161.
111. Ibid., p. 161.
112. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 161 and *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 548.
113. See the preface to *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 258–9.
114. Ibid., pp. 258–9.
115. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 168. The corollary of the idea that Christ embodies all three theocratic powers is that, at the end of time (or 'in the fullness of time'), genuinely believing Christians will themselves take on the nature of Priest, King and Prophet: 'Truly, all genuine believers will be godly Prophets at the end of time, at the appearance of the Church Triumphant, just as they will also be Kings and Priests.'
116. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 504.
117. Ibid., p. 504.
118. Ibid., p. 504.
119. Ibid., p. 506–7.
120. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 163–4.
121. Ibid., p. 164.
122. Ibid., p. 164.
123. Ibid., p. 164.
124. Ibid., p. 164.
125. Ibid., p. 164.
126. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 508.
127. Ibid., p. 502.
128. Ibid., pp. 502–3, 510.
129. Ibid., p. 503.
130. Ibid., p. 503. See also p. 504.
131. Works, vol. IV, pp. 167–8 (*Judaism and the Christian Question*) Works, vol. IV, see also pp 168–71.
132. Ibid., p. 161.
133. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 503.
134. Ibid., p. 504.
135. Ibid., pp. 503–4.
136. Ibid., pp. 509–10.
137. Ibid., p. 544.
138. Works, vol. XII, p. 20. The poem is entitled 'Modest Prophecy', (*Skromnoe prorochestvo*) (1891).

139. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 548–9.
140. Ibid., p. 549.
141. Ibid., p. 534.
142. Ibid., pp. 535–6.
143. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Book III, ch. 10, p. 304, 306–13; Works, vol. XI, pp 329–36. Solovyov writes (p. 311): '*Sans un seul père commun à toute la famille humaine, la vie terrestre des enfants d'Adam sera abandonnée à toutes les divisions,et l'unité n'aura ici-bas qu'une existence idéale.*' See also Book II, chs 1–3 (pp. 87–112 in the French edition of 1922).
144. Letters, vol. III, p. 138 (Solovyov's censorship troubles are mentioned in a letter to Fr. P. Pierling).

CHAPTER 6: JUSTIFICATION OF THE GOOD: GOAL AND PRECEPT

1. Works, vol. IV, p. 243.
2. *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*, Works, vol. III, p. 201.
3. See the opening passage in Book II of *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 337; and see the preface to the first edition of *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, pp. 15–16.
4. See Paul Hayner's *Reason and Existence: Schelling's Philosophy of History* (1967) and Solovyov's *Lectures on Godmanhood*.
5. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, pp. 315–16.
6. *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, p. 8.
7. See Chapter 1 for observations regarding Negative Theology, especially in Chapter 1, pp. 9–14. See also: Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, translated by C. E. Rolt (SPCK Press, 1920, reprinted in 1979), Chapter 4: 'All the Attributes of the Good we express in a transcendent manner by negative images' (pp. 89–90).
8. *Justification of the Good* (preface to the first edition), Works, vol. VIII, p. 22: 'The Good itself is not conditioned by anything, it conditions everything and manifests itself through everything.'
9. Chapter 5; see the section on *All-Unity*.
10. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Book III, ch. 8, esp. pp. 265–70; Works, vol. XI, pp. 311–13.
11. Collected Works of Vladimir Solovyov, see vol. X, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.
12. *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, Works, vol. 1, p. 291.
13. Ibid., pp. 291–2.
14. *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, p. 6.
15. Ibid., p. 44.
16. Ibid., p. 44.
17. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, p. 108.
18. Ibid., pp. 109–10.
19. Ibid., p. 110.
20. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Book III, ch. 1, pp. 212–13; Works, vol. XI, p. 283.
21. Lev Shestov, '*Umozrenie i apokalipsis – Religioznaya filosofiya Vl.*

Solovyova' in *Umozrenie i otkrovenie*, (Paris: YMCA Press 1964) pp. 25–91. See also George Kline's article *'Spor o religioznoy filosofii: L. Shestov protiv V. Solovyova'* in the collection of articles entitled *Russkaya religiozno-filosofskaya mysl' XX veka*, (edited and introduced by Nikolai P. Poltoratsky, University of Pittsburgh, Slavic Series no. 2, 1975) pp. 37–53. For Lev Shestov (1866–1938), see the Shestov Bibliography published by the *Institut d'Etudes Slaves* in Paris (1975); the two-volume biography by N. Baranova-Shestova, *Zhizn' L'va Shestova*, (Paris: La Presse Libre, 1983); Czeslaw Milosz, 'Shestov or the Purity of Despair' in Milosz's collection of essays *Emperor of the Earth – Modes of Eccentric Vision* (University of California Press, 1977) pp. 99–119. This particular essay was written in 1973. See also: G. Andreyev, *'V poiskakh poslednikh otvetov'* (on Lev Shestov), in the Paris-based weekly newspaper *Russkaya Mysl'* (Apr./May 1986) nos. 3618, 3619 & 3620.

22. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, pp. 48–9.
23. Chapter 5; see the section on *Transfiguration*.
24. Works, vol. III, pp. 301–421.
25. Works, vol. XII, pp. 26–7.
26. Ibid., p. 27.
27. Works, vol. X, pp. 193–218. See also: N. Prutskov, *'Dostoevsky i Vladimir Solovyov: "Velikiy Inkvizitor" i "Antikhrist"'* in *Russkaya Literatura 1870–1890 godov*, (*Sbornik* 5), (Sverdlovsk, 1973) pp. 51–78.
28. Czeslaw Milosz, 'Science Fiction and the Coming of Antichrist', (1971), in his *Emperor of the Earth – Modes of Eccentric Vision*, (University of California Press, 1977) pp. 15–31.
29. See note 27, above.
30. Works, vol. X, p. 88.
31. Ibid., p. 88.
32. At the same time Solovyov drew attention to the danger of taking a *purely* subjective morality as the final goal and of denying the various historical and collective manifestations of the Good (*otritsanie vsekh istoricheskikh i sobiratel'nykh proyavleniy i form dobra. . .*), *Justification of the Good*, preface to the first edition, Works, vol. VIII, p. 17. See also, pp. 18–20.
33. Letters, vol. III, pp. 38–42 (a letter from Solovyov to Lev Tolstoy, 1894); see especially p. 38.
34. Works, vol. III, pp. 227–42. See p. 230.
35. Ibid., p. 236.
36. Works, vol. IV, pp. 260–1.
37. N. Vasil'ev, *Logicheskiy i istoricheskiy metody v etike*, (University of Kazan, n/d., but apparently pre-1920s).
38. The Gospel of St. Matthew, 5, 39.
39. *Three Conversations* (first conversation), Works, vol. X, pp. 99–100, 102–4, 107 *passim*.
40. Ibid., p.85: 'The true task of the polemic here is not refutation of a dubious religion, but exposure of a real deception.'
41. Works, vol. I, pp. 133–5.
42. Ibid., p. 27.

43. Ibid., p. 27.
44. Ibid., p.139.
45. Ibid., p. 140.
46. Ibid., p. 150.
47. *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, Works, vol. 1, p. 306.
48. 'The Idea of Humanity according to Auguste Comte', (*Ideya chelovechestva u Avgusta Konta*), Works, vol. IX, p. 172–93. Here see pp. 172.
49. Luk'yanov, vol. I, pp. 209–10.
50. Ibid., pp. 209–10.
51. Works, vol. I, p. 305.
52. Ibid., p. 303.
53. Op.cit.
54. Works, vol. I, p. 304.
55. Works, vol. I, pp. 1–26. This was first published in *The Orthodox Review* (*Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie*), (1873) no. 11, pp. 635–65.
56. Ibid., pp. 1–3.
57. Ibid., pp. 1–3.
58. Ibid., pp. 3–5.
59. Ibid., p. 1.
60. Ibid., p. 5.
61. Ibid., pp. 7–9. Particular attention is paid to Vedic hymns addressed to the figure of *Varuna*.
62. Ibid., p. 5.
63. Ibid., pp. 5–6.
64. Ibid., p.6.
65. Ibid., pp. 6–7.
66. Ibid., p. 10.
67. Ibid., pp. 17–19.
68. Ibid., p. 19.
69. See also: Solovyov's article '*Ponyatie o Boge – v zashchitu filosofii Spinozy*' (1897), an article in defence of Spinoza's philosophy; Works, vol. IX, pp. 3–29.
70. Works, vol. IV, p. 141.
71. See Solovyov's poem on this theme: 'Into the Promised Land' (*V zemlyu obetovannuyu*) (1886), Works, vol. XII, pp. 26–7.
72. Op.cit., pp. 142–50. See also Chapter 5, notes 8 and 80, above.
73. Works, vol. IV, pp. 142–50.
74. Ibid., p. 144.
75. Ibid., p. 144.
76. Ibid., p. 144.
77. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, (fifth lecture), Works, vol. III pp. 75–7.
78. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 144–6.
79. Ibid., pp. 144–6. See also *Lectures on Godmanhood*, (sixth lecture), Works, vol. III, pp. 79–80.
80. Op.cit., p. 145.
81. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, pp. 79–80.
82. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 146.

83. Ibid., pp. 145–6.
84. Ibid., pp. 145–6.
85. Ibid., p. 147.
86. F. Getz, 'On the Attitude of Vladimir Solovyov to the Jewish Question' (*Ob otnoshenii Vladimira Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu*). This was appended to a 1925 edition (Berlin) of Solovyov's article 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it'.
87. Vladimir Solovyov, *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 146.
88. Ibid., p. 146.
89. F. Getz, '*Ob otnoshenii Vladimira Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu*', (1925 edition) p. 128.
90. See Chapter 5, section on *sacred corporeality*.
91. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 148–9.
92. Ibid., p. 149.
93. Ibid., pp. 148–9.
94. Ibid., pp. 157–8.
95. '*Talmud i noveyshaya polemicheskaya literatura o nëm*', Works, vol. VI, pp. 3–32.
96. Ibid., p. 4.
97. Ibid., pp. 4–5.
98. Ibid., p. 5.
99. Ibid., pp. 5–6.
100. Ibid., p. 6.
101. Ibid., p.7.
102. Ibid., p. 7.
103. Ibid., p. 7.
104. Ibid., p. 7.
105. Ibid., p. 7.
106. Ibid., p. 8.
107. Ibid., p. 8.
108. F. Getz, '*Ob otnoshenii Vladimira Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu*', pp. 124–5.
109. *Mahommed: His Life and Religious Teaching*, (*Magomet, ego zhizn' i religioznoe uchenie*), (1896) Works, vol. VII, pp. 203–81.
110. *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, Works, vol. III, p. 30. Part III of this work (pp. 30–48) is devoted specifically to '*the significance of Islām*' and to the common ground shared by Islām and certain of the Christian heresies.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid., pp. 36–37.
113. Ibid., p. 33.
114. Ibid., pp. 33–4.
115. Ibid., p. 34.
116. Ibid., p. 37.
117. Ibid., p. 47.
118. Ibid., pp. 47–8.
119. Ibid., pp. 44-7.
120. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, Works, vol. III, pp. 42-4.

121. Works, vol. X, p. 338.
122. Op.cit., p. 40.
123. Works, vol. III, p. 40.
124. Ibid., p. 40.
125. Ibid., p. 111. (See the first Epistle of John, 5, 19); see also Solovyov's *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Part II, ch. 1, pp. 351–3, and *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, p. 129, where the philosopher quotes the first Epistle of John, 2, verse 15: 'Love not the world, neither the things that *are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' (Compare this text with 1 Corinthians, 3, 18–20, cited in my Chapter 9.)
126. *Lectures on Godmanhood*, (seventh lecture), Works, vol. III, p. 111.
127. Ibid., pp. 48–49 (fourth lecture).
128. Ibid., pp. 155–6 (tenth lecture).
129. Ibid., p. 156.
130. Ibid., p. 156.
131. Theodor Ippolitovich Shcherbatsky [Shcherbatskoy], 1866–1942. See *Indian Culture and Buddhism: A Collection of Articles to the Memory of Academician [F]. I. Shcherbatsky, (Indiyskaya kul'tura i buddizm: sbornik statey pamyati akademika F. I. Shcherbatskogo)*, edited by N. Konrad and G. Bongard-Levin (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1972). See esp. pp. 13–50 for an account of Shcherbatsky's life and scholarly achievements. Professor Shcherbatsky's most widely known works are: *The Central Conception of Buddhism, and the Meaning of the word 'Dharma'*, (London, 1923), *Conception of Buddhist Nirvāna*, (Leningrad, 1927), and *Buddhist Logic* (Leningrad, 1930–32).
132. See Shcherbatsky, *Conception of Buddhist Nirvāna* (Leningrad, 1927), T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London, 1955), and K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy* (Japan, 1966). In each case I have given dates for the first editions, but below I also give dates for more recent editions and the page references referring to those editions.
133. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London, 1955, reprinted in 1980) pp. 44–9.
134. Ibid., pp. 42–3. See also pp. 207, 247 *passim*.
135. Note the point made by Pratima Bowes in her book *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977):

> In the Hindu tradition while Truth, in the sense of the Being of religious reality, is said to be absolute, truth in the sense of the epistemological status of the statements we make about it is not claimed to be so.
>
> (p. 272)

136. K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy* (first edition 1966; references here are to the Delhi edition, published by Motilal Banarsidass in 1978) p. 274. See also, pp. 159–60.
137. Ibid., p. 168.

138. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 226–7.
139. Ibid., p. 212.
140. Ibid., p. 160. See also p. 271: '. . . The dialectic, then, as the Śūnyatā of drstis, is the negation of standpoints, which are the initial negation of the real that is essentially indeterminate. . . . Correctly understood, Śūnyatā is not annihilation, but the negation of negation; it is the conscious correction of an initial unconscious falsification of the real.'
141. Th. Stcherbatsky, *Conception of Buddhist Nirvāna* (Delhi, 1975 edition) p. 45. Here I give the spelling of the author's name as used for this edition.
142. Ibid., pp. 45–6.
143. *Lectures on Godmanhood* (seventh lecture) Works, vol. III, p. 112.
144. *The History and Future of Theocracy*, Works, vol. IV, p. 339.
145. Ibid., pp. 337–9.
146. Ibid., pp. 341–2.
147. Ibid., pp. 339, 342.
148. Ibid., p. 341.
149. *Justification of the Good*, Part I, ch. 1, Works, vol. VIII, p. 59.
150. 'Three Forces' (*Tri sily*), Works, vol. I, pp. 228–31; *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*, Book II, ch. 7, pp. 138–9 (and Works, vol. XI, pp. 243–4).
151. 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it', Works, vol. VI, pp. 7–8.
152. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 163.
153. Ibid., p. 160.
154. Ibid.., pp. 161–3.
155. Works, vol. X, pp. 429–35. It should be noted that Solovyov was greatly critical of de Maistre's extreme views on justice (p. 431), while conceding that in some respects his thought was innovative and original (see, for instance, pp. 430–1).
156. Letters, vol. III, p. 172. Here Solovyov affirmed his membership of the Russian Orthodox Church and also stressed that he had tried to dissuade others from personal convertion to the Roman Catholic Church (28 Nov. 1886).
157. *The National Question in Russia*, (*Natsional'niy vopros v Rossii*), Works, vol. V, pp. 3–401.
158. Dmitry Stremoukhov, *Vladimir Soloviev et son Oeuvre Messianique, Université de Strasbourg*, 1935, p. 117: *'Au fond, ce n'est qu'avec Soloviev que le Slavophilisme s'érige en véritable messianisme'*. This fine study has been translated into English by Elizabeth Meyendorff, *Vladimir Soloviev and His Messianic Work* (Massachusetts: Nordland Books, 1980).
159. Prince Evgeniy Trubetskoy, *The Worldview of Vladimir Solovyov*, (*Mirosozertsanie Vladimira Solovyova*), (Moscow, 1913) vol. I, p. 514: *'Na teokraticheskogo tsarya on vozlagaet takie nadezhdy, po sravneniyu s kotorymi slavyanofil'skie mechtaniya mogut pokazat'sya skromnymi.'*
160. *Russian thought*, (*Russkaya Mysl'*) (Moscow, 1912) pp. 1–35.
161. Ibid., p.35.
162. Ibid., p. 34: *'Vechniy vselenskiy, khristianskiy ideal torzhestvuet*

pobedu nad vremennoy mechtoy velikogo religioznogo myslitelya i nad natsionalisticheskoy romantikoy ego molodosti.'

163. Ibid., p. 11.
164. Vladimir Solovyov, *'Saint Vladimir et l'Etat Chrétien'*. This was written by Solovyov in French in 1888, and was published in the French paper *L'Univers* on 4, 11 and 19 Aug. 1888. For the Russian translation by G. A. Rachinsky, see Collected Works of Vladimir Solovyov, vol. XI, pp. 119–35. In this article, which appeared in the year marking the 900th anniversary of Russia becoming a Christian nation, the philosopher wrote of the need for Russia to overcome the negative principle of egoism and national particularity through voluntary *denial* of egoism – such as Saint Vladimir himself achieved.

CHAPTER 7: SCRIPTURE AND REASON: A DUAL ALLEGIANCE

1. Vladimir Solovyov, *Theoretical Philosophy* (*Teoreticheskaya filosofiya*), Works, vol. IX, pp. 89–90. This work, which belongs to the years 1897–99, was not completed.
2. Vladimir Solovyov, *The Drama of Plato's Life*, Works, vol. IX, p. 199.
3. Ibid., p. 197. See also his *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, Works, vol. I, pp. 291–2.
4. See the opening passage of *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, Works, vol. I, p. 250.
5. Ibid., p. 250.
6. In his work *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Professor T. R. V. Murti writes:

> 'Spiritual life is born of the sharp contrast felt between what is and what should be. It is the consciousness of suffering. Pain as an undesirable state is felt by all beings; they all try, in their own way, to get rid of it. The layman, however, is not aware of its magnitude or intensity. . . . Every Indian system begins with the problem of suffering. The parallel on the intellectual side is the consciousness of illusion. That makes us critical, reflective. *Consciousness of suffering leads us to discard secular values and to go in search of the abiding.*' (My italics)
>
> Allen & Unwin, 1980 edition, pp. 260 & 261

7. As Solovyov's examination of the non-Christian religions shows, he did not regard this prospect of *universal* salvation as a feature of all religions (see Chapters 4 and 9). This collective aspect of salvation, as well as the true freedom and worth of the constituent members of human society, are stressed in Solovyov's doctoral thesis *A Critique of Abstract Principles*, (*Kritika otvlechënnykh nachal*, 1877–80), Works, vol. II, see pp. 176–7 *passim*, and in the conclusion of *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, p. 514.

8. *Justification of the Good*, (at the end of the Introduction), Works, vol. VIII, p.47.
9. Ibid., p. 198 (Part II, ch.8).
10. The care and precision of Solovyov in this task of reformulation may be judged if we recall that he revised *Justification of the Good* five times (see Works, vol. VIII, p. 7. See the *D.Phil.* dissertation on this work of reformulation written by Bruno Wembris, *The Russian Text of Vladimir Solov'ev's "justification of the Good"*, (*Der russische Text der "Rechtfertigung des Guten" von Vladimir Solov'ev*), Eberhard-Karls Univ., Tübingen, 1973.
11. See Radlov's biographical sketch of the philosopher published in Solovyov's Collected Works, vol. X, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.
12. *Justification of the Good*, Works, vol. VIII, p. 45.
13. Ernest Radlov, 'Vladimir Solovyov's Teaching on the Freedom of Will' (*Uchenie Vladimira Solovyova o svobode voli*), *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, Feb. 1911. See also Solovyov's articles for the *Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopaedia* on predetermination (Works, vol. X, pp. 258–9) and on *freedom of will* (Works, vol. X, pp. 272–84, especially pp. 275–7).
14. Another recent figure to acknowledge Saint Augustine's insights into this matter was Ananda Coomaraswamy, although he cites textual evidence to show that Saint Augustine was but one of numerous authoritative figures to formulate such a view of 'free will'. See Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Selected Papers*, (Princeton University Press, 1977, vol. II, pp. 370–1): '. . . We are, then, at the mercy of our own characteristic willing; when the sensitive powers are given free rein, whenever we are doing what we like or thinking wishfully, in so far as our whole behaviour – whatever good or evil – is unprincipled, we are not free agents, but passive subjects of what are rightly called our "passions". . . . So, Saint Augustine asks: "Why, then, should miserable men venture to pride themselves on their 'free will' before they are set free?" (*De spiritu et littera* 52). . . . Thus Free Will is not ours by nature, but only potentially; our self-will is only a wanting, a hunger and a thirst, and anything but a Free Will.'
15. *Justification of the Good* (Part I, ch. 1), Works, vol. VIII, pp. 53–4.
16. Ibid., pp. 59, 60–1.
17. Ibid., p. 206 (Part II, ch. 8). In the same passage from which this extract is taken, Solovyov notes that this religious aspect of pity does not negate natural pity or replace it; rather, it strengthens and deepens natural pity.
18. Ibid., pp. 96–7 (Part I, ch. 3). See also Christopher Butler, 'Soloviev', in *Downside Review*, 1932, p. 53 (on Solovyov's understanding of shame), and Joseph Schneuwly, *Das Schamgefühl in Wladimir Solovieffs "Rechtfertigung des Guten"*, a doctoral thesis for the University of Freiburg, (Switzerland; Freiburg, 1954).
19. Ibid., pp. 91–5.
20. Ibid., pp. 93–5.
21. Ibid., pp. 93–5.
22. Ibid., p. 98.

23. The opening words of *Justification of the Good*, Part I, ch. 1, Works, vol. VIII, p. 49.
24. Ibid., p. 94.
25. Ibid., p. xi.
26. Ibid., p. 64.
27. Ibid., p. 64.
28. Ibid., p. 64.
29. *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge*, Works, vol. I, pp. 303–7.
30. *Judaism and the Christian Question*, Works, vol. IV, p. 146.
31. Following Schelling, Solovyov viewed the increasing perfection of the world order as a gradual process realized precisely in the historical development of conscious, self-aware man.
32. Thomas Masaryk, *Spirit of Russia*, (London, 1955 edition) Vol. II, ch. 17; Lev Shestov, 'Speculation and Apocalypse', (*Umozrenie i apokalipsis*), in *Umozrenie i otkrovenie* (Paris: YMCA Press 1964) pp. 25–91. Masaryk writes (vol. II, p. 256):

> '[Vladimir Solovyov] had an internal struggle of his own, the struggle with himself, the struggle between faith and unfaith. "Kant" and "Plato" are the two war-cries wherein the tragic problem of Solovyov is comprised. The man's whole life was a vain attempt to bring these two poles together, to reconcile their opposition. Kant represents deliberate action in accordance with the light of reason, represents individual activity and spontaneity; Plato represents deliberate receptivity, passive contemplation of the objective, higher world. Kant represents the self-sufficiency and independence of the individual critical understanding; Plato represents dependence upon the Absolute, upon the revelation of the Absolute, upon dogmas, upon the Church. . . . I must insist that his [Solovyov's] friends and adherents discern in the works of their teacher and master a unity which is in truth non-existent' (p.257).

33. Lev Shestov, *Umozrenie i apokalipsis*, pp. 42, 88–90.
34. Thomas Masaryk, *Spirit of Russia*, vol. II, p. 277.
35. Works, vol. X, pp. 416–21, 421–4 and 424–6 respectively.
36. Letters, vol. III, pp. 88–9, 105–6.
37. Vladimir Solovyov, *Theoretical Philosophy*, Works, vol. IX, p. 93.
38. See, for instance, *Justification of the Good*, Part I, ch. 5, Works, vol. VIII, p. 122.
39. Ibid., pp. 63–4 (Part I, ch. 1).
40. *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle* (Book III, ch. 1) pp. 212–13; Works, vol. XI, p. 283.
41. Ibid.
42. *Theoretical Philosophy*, Works, vol. IX, p. 90.
43. *The Great Controversy and Christian Politics*, Works, vol. IV, pp. 103–11. Here Solovyov describes the contemplative ideal of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the active ideal of the Western,

Catholic Church as ideals that complement and require one another. Both at the collective and the individual levels, *exclusive* assertion of the worth of contemplation or action is harmful.

44. See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, ch.11: 'The Divine Light', pp. 217–35, esp. pp. 217–18, 224, 231, 232.
45. *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Works, vol. III, p. 314.

CHAPTER 8: SOLOVYOV'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE

1. Works, vol. X, p. 470.
2. Works, vol. III, p. 201.
3. Works, vol. IX, pp. 194–241 and vol. VI, pp. 381–93.
4. Works, vol. IX, pp. 215–16.
5. Ibid., p. 216.
6. See Professor Janko Lavrin's foreword to the English translation of this work, published in 1935 under the title *Plato*, translated by Richard Gill and published in London. 'Helios Fountain', an Edinburgh publisher specialising in the production of works by and about Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), has published an English translation of *The Drama of Plato's Life*, with an introduction by Wilhelm Schneider, 1980.
7. Letters, vol. III, pp. 88–89, 91.
8. Ibid., p. 88.
9. Works, vol. X, p. 472.
10. Works, vol. IX, pp. 239–40.
11. Ibid., pp. 221, 225, 227, 229–30, 231, 234–5.
12. Works, vol. XII, pp. 360–480, 496–525.
13. Works, vol. X, pp. 453–79.
14. Works, p. 237. Here Solovyov stresses that Plato was not content with being a theoretician concerned with an ideal type of society, but wished to have his scheme for the organisation of society made a reality.
15. Op. cit., pp. 466–8, 470, 472 *passim*.
16. Both the active life and the contemplative life are valued in Christianity, but, as the episode of Martha and Mary in the New Testament shows (Luke 10, 38–42), those leading the active life may fail to recognise the *indispensability* of the contemplative element, even for a predominantly active life. See *Traditional Modes of Contemplation and Action*, (Imperial University of Teheran/Allen & Unwin, 1976; papers delivered at a colloquium in Texas in 1973).
17. Conversely, all denials of that goal or of the active efforts to attain it are characterised by Solovyov as deliberate acts of self-assertion (*samoutverzhdenie*), which simply aggravate man's unsatisfactory present condition, that of mutual alienation (*otchuzhdenie*) and struggle.
18. Works, vol. IX, pp. 239–40. (In the 1980 English edition of the work, this key passage appears on pp. 58–9).
19. Works, vol. X, p. 470. The last sentence reads as follows in the

Russian original: *'On khochet prakticheski protivodeystvovat' zlu, ispravlyat' mirskie nepravdy, pomogat' mirskim bedstviyam.'* An almost identical sentence is used in *The Drama of Plato's Life* (Works, vol. IX, p. 236).

20. See S. M. Luk'yanov, *About Vl. S. Solovyov in His Young Years, (O Vl. S. Solovyove v ego molodye gody)* vol. III, pp. 283–307. The manuscript of *Solovyov in Thebaîd* is preserved at the Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TSGALI) in Moscow, among the Sollogub Papers (*Fond* 453).
21. Luk'yanov's study also includes information regarding relations between V. Solovyov and F. Sollobug (vol. III, pp. 307–11) and notes that Solovyov was much amused by this portrayal of him (pp. 307–8).
22. Luk'yanov, vol. III, p. 284:

    Yavilsya noviy vrag – otvazhniy Solovyov . . .
    A koren' zla uspel uzh potryasti,
    V menya streloy nauk i drotom very tselya,
    On tshchitsya moy prestol s litsa zemli smesti.

23. Vasiliy Rozanov, The Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TSGALI), Moscow, *Fond* 419, the Vasiliy Rozanov Papers, *Op.* 1, *ed. khr.* 193.
24. *Justification of the Good,* Part III, ch. 15: 'The Criminal Question seen from the Moral Point of View', Works, vol. VIII, pp. 332–60 and *Law and Morality,* chs 3 and 4, Works, vol. VIII, pp. 551–600.
25. Vladimir Solovyov, 'On Clerical Power in Russia', (*O dukhovnoy vlasti v Rossii*), vol. III, pp. 227–42, esp. pp. 235–5 and 239–40. See also A. F. Koni, *'Pamyati Vladimira Solovyova'* (Petersburg, 1903), p. 38.
26. Letters, see the Appendix to Letters, vol. IV, as published in the 1970 *Foyer Oriental Chrétien* edition: correspondence between V. Solovyov and L. Tolstoy, pp. 254–5. In this instance Solovyov was seeking support for his protest against discriminatory legislation regarding Jews that was soon to be introduced by the government (1890).
27. Works, vol. III, pp. 199–205.
28. Ibid., p. 201.
29. Works, vol. XII, p. 35.

    . . . Zhizn' tol'ko podvig – i pravda zhivaya Svetit bessmert'em v istlevshikh grobakh.

30. Op. cit.
31. Works, vol. VI, pp. 381–93.
32. A. A. Kireyev, in a letter to Petrovsky, editor of the *Moscow Gazette* (*Moskovskie Vedomosti*), Lenin State Library, Moscow, Petrovsky Archive I, 64, (letter of 4 Nov. 1891).
33. V. O. Klyuchevsky, *Letters, Diaries, Aphorisms and Thoughts on History, (Pis'ma, dnevniki, aforizmy i mysli ob istorii),* (Moscow, published in 1968) pp. 258–9.
34. See Konstantin Leontyev, his letters to A. Alexandrov, in *Pamyati K. N. Leontyeva,* (Sergiev-Posad, 1915) p. 122: '. . . Can't you somehow get me the original [text] of the terrible paper by Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov? I am reading [about it] in the *Moscow Gazette,* and I do not want to believe my own eyes . . .'.

35. Works, vol. VI, p. 381.
36. Ibid., p. 381.
37. Letters, vol. III, p. 172. In the pages that Nadezhda Gorodetsky devotes to Solovyov's philosophy in her book *The Humiliated Christ in Modern Russian Thought* (London, 1938, pp. 127–39), she observes: 'A man who consecreated his life to the study of ecclesiastical and religious problems, Soloviev was not a very practising Orthodox. He attended, for instance, the Easter Night service of the Orthodox Church in Baden-Baden in 1887 and, for the first time in his life, he stayed until the end of the service.'
38. Works, vol. VI, pp. 381–2.
39. Ibid., p. 382.
40. Ibid., p. 388.
41. Ibid., p. 382.
42. Ibid., p. 382.
43. Ibid., p. 384.
44. Ibid., p. 385.
45. Works, vol. VII, pp. 285–325.
46. Works, vol.. VI, pp. 385–7.
47. Ibid., pp. 388–90.
48. Ibid., p. 390. Another instance where the philosopher attacks one-sided, exclusive spirituality is in his article 'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it', (*'Talmud i noveyshaya polemicheskaya literatura o nëm'*), written in 1886; Works, vol. VI, pp. 7, 8–9.
49. Ibid., p. 389.
50. Ibid., p. 390.
51. Works, vol. VII, p. 285.
52. Ibid., p. 287.
53. Chapter 5, see the section on *perfectibility*.
54. Lev Tolstoy, *The Law of Violence and the Law of Love*, (*Zakon nasiliya i zakon lyubvi*), 1908, *Collected Works of Lev Tolstoy*, vol. 37, pp. 152–3. There is an English translation of this work by Mary Koutouzow Tolstoy, published by Anthony Blond in 1970, and appears under the title *The Law of Love and the Law of Violence*, (sic). The excerpt quoted comes from p. 2 of the English translation.
55. Letters of Vladimir Solovyov, vol. III, pp. 38–42. Writing to Tolstoy in the Summer of 1894, Solovyov observed: 'All our disagreement may be concentrated in one concrete point – the resurrection of Christ', (p. 38). See also Zinaida Minz, 'From the History of the Polemics involving Lev Tolstoy: L. Tolstoy and Vl. Solovyov', (*Iz istorii polemiki vokrug L'va Tolstogo: L. Tolstoy i Vl. Solovyov*) in *Trudy po russkoy i slavyanskoy filologii*, University of Tartu, 1966.
56. Vladimir Solovyov, Works, vol. VI, p. 391.
57. Ibid., p. 392.
58. See the preface to Solovyov's *The History and Future of Theocracy*, *Works*, vol. IV, p. 243: 'To justify the faith of our fathers, raising it to a new level of national consciousness... this is the general task [towards which] my labour [is directed].

59. Works, vol. IV, pp. 135–85.
60. Ibid., pp. 165–6.
61. *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*, Works, vol. VI, p. 391.
62. Ibid., p. 391.
63. Dmitry Stremoukhov, *Vladimir Soloviev et son Oeuvre Messianique*, (University of Strasbourg, 1935) p. 199: '*Au fond, jamais les Slavophiles dans leurs vues les plus hardies n'avaient prédit à la Russie un rôle d'une magnificence et d'une ampleur historique semblable à celui que lui promet Soloviev. Mais l'accomplissement de cet avenir est fondé sur une critique sévère des réalités russes . . .*' in Elizabeth Meyendorff's English translation (Massachusetts: Nordland Books, 1980) see p. 223.
64. Vasiliy Rozanov, *By the Church Walls*, (*Okolo tserkovnykh sten*), (Petersburg, 1906) vol. 1, p. 240: '*Esli komu usilenno ne bylo prichin "veselo zhit' na Rusi", to eto Solovyovu.*'

CHAPTER 9: A VISION OF CONFLICT AND DECLINE

1. N. Setnitsky, 'Russian Thinkers on China', (*Russkie mysliteli o Kitae*), (Kharbin, 1926) p. 18.
2. Works, vol. XII, p. 96: '*I tretiy Rim lezhit vo prakhe*'.
3. Ibid., p. 95.
4. Ibid., p. 96.
5. *China and Europe*, (*Kitai i Evropa*), Works, vol. VI, pp. 93–150. This was first published in *The Russian Review*, (*Russkoe Obozrenie*), (1890) no. 2, pp. 673–96; no. 3, pp. 187–206; no. 4, pp. 761–76.
6. Solovyov is mistaken in his view that Taoism emanates from the cult of the ancestors. It is actually Confucianism which developed from that cult.
7. Works, vol. VI, p. 117.
9. Ibid., p. 117.
9. Ibid., p. 118.
10. See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, (University of California Press, 1984). Currently there is controversy about whether a particular individual called Lao-Tzu actually existed, and the *Tao Te Ching* is sometimes treated as a compilation of wise insights collected by a number of anonymous individuals. The argument in my Chapter 9 is not affected by the question of authorship of the *Tao Te Ching*, though it should be noted that Solovyov believed that Lao-Tzu was a particular identifiable individual and that Taoism was the system he devised and expounded in the *Tao Te Ching*. As Professor Izutsu argues in his *Sufism and Taoism*, (at the beginning of Part II), there is sufficient *unity* and coherence in the content and message of the *Tao Te Ching* to warrant treatment of it as the work of one individual author, and this is a point I accept.
11. Works, vol. VI, p. 118.
12. Ibid., p. 118.
13. Ibid., p. 119.
14. Ibid., p. 120.

15. Ibid., p. 123.
16. Ibid., p. 121.
17. Ibid., p. 119.
18. Ibid., pp. 120–1. See also the tenth of the *Lectures on Godmanhood* (pp. 155–6), where Solovyov writes of Indian religious and philosophical thought as manifesting this same merging and indistinctness of concepts. (See Chapter 6, p. 117, on Solovyov's examination of the non-Christian religions.)
19. Ibid., p. 122.
20. Ibid., pp. 135–43.
21. Ibid., pp. 138–9.
22. Ibid., p. 139.
23. Ibid. Solovyov's claim regarding the 'indisputable' poverty of Chinese achievements is effectively countered by Sir Joseph Needham's multi-volume study *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge University Press). The first volume of this work appeared in 1945, and the entire project has yet to be completed.
24. Ibid., pp. 146–7.
25. In the context of his affirmation that the European ideal of *universal* salvation is the only ideal that answers humanity's needs adequately, Solovyov provides a footnote in his own essay to say that the ideal of *universal* salvation is absent from the Eastern philosophies:

> The idea of true life is not alien to Buddhism (in its latest form), nor even to Taoism. But true life presents itself to the followers of Buddha and Lao-Tzu as the condition of separate enlightened beings, but not as the collective task of all mankind; the idea of worldwide progress and the Kingdom of God we find solely on Judaeo-Christian ground.
>
> Works, vol. VI, p. 146

This assertion, on Solovyov's part, ignores the very great emphasis that central Buddhist teaching places upon responsibility towards all sentient beings, upon conscious avoidance of violence towards all sentient beings, and upon the import of 'Right Livelihood' (again, non-injurious) in the Buddhists' Eightfold Path. Māhayāna Buddhism's ideal of *Bodhisattvahood*, and the literature on that ideal, give most eloquent expression to the characteristic Buddhist concern for universal well-being and integration. The Māhayāna literature records the vows of various *Bodhisattvas* to postpone their final enlightenment until they have effected the salvation of 'the very last blade of grass'. The ideal of *Bodhisattvahood* can be, and is, distinguished from the earlier Indian ideal of the *Arhat*: according to Professor T. R. V. Murti, in *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, (1955):

> The *Arhat* rests satisfied with achieving his own private salvation; he is not necessarily and actively interested in the welfare of others. . . . The *Bodhisattva* makes the salvation of all his own good'.
>
> 1980 edition, p. 263

This is, clearly, one instance where Solovyov's evaluation of Eastern philosophies and spiritual disciplines was hampered by the limited amount of available literature and exegesis, literature available to us today. It is virtually certain that Solovyov would have read a much greater proportion of Buddhist texts and commentary from the Hinayāna Tradition (Theravāda, the earlier School) than from the Māhayāna Tradition.

26. Works, vol. VI, p. 146. This same point is made towards the end of Solovyov's detailed letter to Tolstoy in 1894, enumerating their differences in belief, Letters, vol. III, p. 42.
27. *On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview*, Works, vol. VI, pp. 381–2.
28. Sergey Solovyov, *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 51.
29. Sergey Solovyov (the historian, 1820–79), *Public Lectures on Peter the Great, (Publichye chteniya o Petre Velikom*, Moscow University Press, 1872; *The History of Russia from Most Ancient Times, (Istoriya Rossii s drevneyshikh vremën)*, vol. XVIII. In the fifteen-volume edition published in Moscow in 1963, see vol. IX, pp. 541–53 for Sergey Solovyov's assessment of Peter the Great's overall achievements. See also: 'Sergey Solovyov's view of Petrine Reform', (*Vzglyad Sergeya Solovyova na reformu Petra*), an anonymous article in *Notes of the Fatherland, (Otechestvennye Zapiski)*, (1865) 2, pp. 497–520; Vladimir Solovyov, 'Some Words in Defence of Peter the Great', (*Neskol'ko slov v zashchitu Petra Velikogo*), (1888) Works, vol. V, pp. 161–80; *Byzantinism and Russia* (*Vizantizm i Rossiya*), (1896) vol. VII, esp. p. 300; 'Concerning the Last Events', ('*Po povodu poslednikh sobytiy*'), Works, vol. X, pp. 222–6, especially pp. 225–6); Joachim Sternkopf, *Sergej und Vladimir Solov'ev: Eine Analyse ihrer geschichtstheoretischen und geschichtsphilosophischen Anschauungen* a thesis for the University of Tübingen, 1969, published in Munich in 1973.
30. Sergey Solovyov (the younger), *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov*, pp. 36–7.
31. S. M. Luk'yanov, *About Vl. S. Solovyov in His Young Years*, (*O Vl. S. Solovyove v ego molodye gody*), vol. I, p. 234.
32. Op. cit., p. 44.
33. Dmitry Stremoukhov, *Vladimir Soloviev et son Oeuvre Messianique*, pp. 19–20: '*En somme, le fils critiquera la philosophie des Slavophiles du même point de vue que le père avait critiqué leurs théories historiques*'. In Elizabeth Meyendorff's English translation, see p. 25.
34. Sergey Solovyov (the historian), *Notes for my Children*, (*Zapiski dlya moikh detey*), (Petrograd, 1914) p. 60.
35. Sergey Solovyov (the younger), *The Life and Creative Evolution of Vladimir Solovyov*, p. 57. Here Sergey Solovyov actually quotes words from an article by Lev Lopatin, 'Vl. Solovyov and Prince E. N. Trubetskoy', (*Vl. Solovyov i knyaz' E. N. Trubetskoy*), in *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology, (Voprosy filosofii i psyikhologii)*, (Sept.–Oct. 1913) p. 356.
36. This is from the concluding line of Solovyov's poem '*Drakon*', Works, vol. XII, p. 97. The last stanza of the poem reads:

Polno lyubov'yu Bozh'e lono,
Ono zovët nas vsekh ravno . . .
No pered pastiyu drakona
Ty ponyal: krest i mech – odno'.

The poem was written in June 1900, that is, two months before Solovyov's death.

37. *Byzantinism and Russia*, Works, vol. VII, p. 299.
38. See Chapter 8, note 63.
39. Works, vol. XII, p. 95.
40. Nicolas Zernov, *Moscow the Third Rome*, (London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1938).
41. *Byzantinism and Russia*, Works, vol. VII, pp. 285–6.
42. Works, vol. XII, p. 96.
43. Vasiliy Rozanov, 'At the Panikhida in Memory of Vladimir Solovyov', (*Na panikhide Vladimira Solovyova*) in *By the Church Walls* (Okolo tserkovnykh Sten, Petersburg, 1906) vol. I, p. 241.
44. N. Setnitsky, 'Russian Thinkers on China', (*Russkie mysliteli o Kitae*), (Kharbin, 1926) p. 20.
45. Ibid., p. 18.
46. Works, vol. VI, pp. 146–7.
47. N. Setnitsky, 'Russian Thinkers on China', see pp. 16–17.
48. Op. cit., p. 388.
49. Vladimir Solovyov, *Magomet, ego zhizn' i religioznoe uchenie*, Works, vol. VII, pp. 203–81, esp. pp. 230–1, 279, 280–1.
50. Works, vol. VII, esp. pp. 286–7, 288–9, 294, and 300–1.
51. Works, vol. IV, p. 165.
52. Ibid., pp. 165–6.
53. Ibid., p. 165.
54. Ibid., p. 166.
55. *China and Europe*, Works, vol. VI, p. 149.

A List of Vladimir Solovyov's Books and Articles Examined or Referred to in This Study

(Titles are mentioned in the order that they appear in Solovyov's Collected Works, 1966 Brussels edition)

VOLUME I

'The Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism' – *'Mifologicheskiy protsess v drevnem yazychestve'* (1873).
The Crisis of Western Philosophy – Krizis zapadnoy filosofii (1874).
'Three Forces' – *'Tri sily'* (1877).
The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge – Filosofskie nachala tsel'nogo znaniya (1877).

VOLUME II

A Critique of Abstract Principles – Kritika otvlechënnykh nachal, (1877–80).

VOLUME III

Lectures on Godmanhood – Chteniya o bogochelovechestve (1877–81).
Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky – Tri rechi v pamyat' F. M. Dostoevskogo (1881–83).
'On Clerical Power in Russia' – *'O dukhovnoy vlasti v Rossii'* (1881).
'About the Schism in the Russian Nation and Society' – *'O raskole v russkom narode i obshchestve'* (1882–83).
The Spiritual Foundations of Life – Dukhovnye osnovy zhizni (1882–84).

VOLUME IV

'The Great Controversy and Christian Politics' – *'Velikiy spor i khristianskaya politika'* (1883).
Judaism and the Christian Question – *Evreystvo i khristianskiy vopros* (1884).
The History and Future of Theocracy – Istoriya i budushchnost' teokratii (1885–87).

VOLUME V

The National Question in Russia – Natsional'niy vopros v Rossii (1883–88/1888–91).

VOLUME VI

'The Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it in Austria and Germany' – *'Talmud i noveyshaya polemicheskaya literatura o nëm v Avstrii i Germanii'* (1886). *Note*: I provide an abbreviated form of this title in my study.

China and Europe – Kitay i Evropa (1890).

'On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview – 'Ob upadke srednevekovogo mirosozertsaniya' (1891).

VOLUME VII

Mahommed, His Life and Religious Teaching – Magomet, ego zhizn' i religioznoe uchenie (1896).

Byzantinism and Russia – Vizantizm i Rossiya (1896).

'Sergey Mikhailovich Solovyov' (1896).

VOLUME VIII

Justification of the Good – Opravdanie dobra (1897).

VOLUME IX

Theoretical Philosophy – Teoreticheskaya filosofiya (1897–99).

'The Idea of Humanity according to Auguste Comte' – *'Ideya chelovechestva u Avgusta Konta'* (1898).

The Drama of Plato's Life – Zhiznennaya drama Platona (1898).

VOLUME X

Three Conversations – Tri razgovora (1899–1900).

'A Short Story about Antichrist' – 'Kratkaya povest' ob antikhriste' (1899–1900).

'Concerning the Last Events' – *'Po povodu poslednikh sobytiy'* (1900).

Articles for the *Brockhaus–Ephron Encyclopaedia*.

'The Russian Idea' – *''L'Idée russe''* (1888); Russian translation in Collected Works, vol. XI.

'St. Vladimir and the Christian State' – *'St. Vladimir et l'Etat Chrétien' (1888); Russian translation in Collected Works, vol. XI.*

Russia and the Universal Church – 'La russie et l'Eglise Universelle (1889); Russian translation in Collected works, vol. XI.

Selected poems from Collected Works, vol. XII.

Select Bibliography

MAIN BIBLIOGRAPHIES CONSULTED

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S. A. Sidorov, *Bibliografiya rabot o Vl. Solovyove;* compiled between Feb. and Mar. 1916, this bibliography was commissioned by the Vladimir Solovyov Society (*Obshchestvo pamyati Vladimira Solovyova*). The bibliography contains sixty six items. It is held in the Manuscript Department of the Lenin State Library (GBL), Moscow, in the M. K. Morozova Archive (*Fond* 171), *Karton* 22, *ed.khr.* 21.

K. Shlapakov, *Bibliografiya rabot o Vl. Solovyove;* this is a continuation of the above, compiled between Sept. 1916 and Mar. 1917 and commissioned by the Vladimir Solovyov Society. This contains 135 items. Manuscript Department, Lenin State Library (GBL), Moscow, M. K. Morozova Archive (*Fond* 171).

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WORKS BY VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

There have been three editions of Solovyov's Collected Works. They appeared as follows:

Sobranie sochineniy Vladimira Solovyova, vols I–IX, (Petersburg: *"Obshchestvennaya Pol'za"*, 1901–7), edited by Ernest L. Radlov.

Sobranie sochineniy Vladimira Solovyova, vols I–X, (Petersburg: *"Prosveshchenie"*, 1911–14), edited by Ernest L. Radlov and Sergey M. Solovyov (the younger). The modern 1966 edition, mentioned below, was largely based on this second edition of the Collected Works.

Sobranie sochineniy Vladimira Solovyova, vols I–XII, (Brussels: *Izdatel'stvo "Zhizn' s Bogom", Foyer Oriental Chrétien.* 1966).

Pis'ma Vladimira Solovyova (Letters of Vladimir Solovyov, edited by Ernest L. Radlov).

Vols I–III (published by *"Obshchestvennaya Pol'za"*, 1908–11).

Vol. IV (published by *"Vremya"*, 1923).

Pis'ma Vladimira Solovyova (Brussels: *Izdatel'stvo "Zhizn' s Bogom", Foyer Oriental Chrétien,* 1970). This is a one-volume edition, containing all the

material in the four volumes mentioned above. (This is sometimes referred to as vols XIII and XIV of the Collected Works).

Pis'ma Solovyova F. B. Getzu (Petersburg, 1909). These letters may be of interest to those concerned with the philosopher's contacts with Jews and Judaism.

Seven editions of Solovyov's poetry appeared between 1891 and 1921, the first three during his lifetime: first edition, 1891; second edition, 1895; third edition, 1900; fourth edition, 1902; fifth edition, 1904; sixth edition, 1915; seventh edition, 1921.

Shutochnye p'esy Vladimira Solovyova (Vladimir Solovyov's Comic Plays), (Moscow: "*Zadruga*", 1922).

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La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle; this went into five editions, of which the first three were 1889, 1906 and 1922. (I have used the third edition, published by *Delamain Boutelleau et Cie.*)

Saint Vladimir et l'Etat Chrétien (to mark the 900th anniversary of Russia becoming a Christian nation), published in *L'Univers,* 4, 11 and 19 Aug. 1888.

Magomet, ego zhizn' i religioznoe uchenie, (Biograficheskaya Biblioteka F. Pavlenko, 1896) Rare Books Department, Lenin State Library, (GBL), Moscow.

Poslednyaya lektsiya Vl. Solovyova v peterburgskom universitete (Moscow: *Pechatnya M. Alisova – A. Grigor'evf,* 1882).

Talmud – s prilozheniem F. Getz "Ob otnoshenii Vl Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu:

1. *Talmud i noveyshaya polemicheskaya literatura o nëm* (by Vladimir Solovyov)
2. *Evrei – ikh verouchenie i nravouchenie* (by Vladimir Solovyov)
3. *Ob otnoshenii Vl. Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu* (by F. Getz).

Published by "*Zarya*", Berlin 1925.

Tri razgovora, an edition published in New York by Chekhov Publishing House, 1954.

O evreyskan narode (stikhi, pris'ma), edited by M. Weinstein (Jerusalem, 1987).

WORKS IN TRANSLATION

The most complete translations of Solovyov's works have been the translations into German and into Japanese.

Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Wladimir Solowjew, edited by Wladimir Szylkarski (Munich: Erich Wewel Verlag, 1954–1979).

I am informed that the Japanese-language edition of Solovyov's works, published in Tokyo in 1982, includes:

The Crisis of Western Philosophy, Lectures on Godmanhood, Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky, The Spiritual Foundations of Life, The Meaning of Love and *Three Conversations*, as well as Solovyov's essay 'Japan', written in 1890 (Works, vol. VI, pp. 153–73). The translator is Michio Mikoshiba, who lectures at Chiba University, Japan. Japanese translations of Solovyov's works appeared as early as 1916 (*Lectures on Godmanhood*) and 1919 (*Justification of the Good*), and his articles on aesthetics were translated and published in 1928.

Lectures on Godmanhood, an English translation by Peter Zouboff (London: Dennis Dobson, 1948).

God, Man and the Church, a translation of Solovyov's *The Spiritual Foundations of Life*; (translation by Donald Attwater), (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1938, reprinted in 1973); *Les Fondements Spirituels de la Vie* (Paris, 1948).

Russia and the Universal Church, a translation from the original French text (*La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle*) by Herbert Rees, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948).

The Meaning of Love, a translation by Jane Marshall, (London: Centenary Press, 1945).

The Meaning of Love, a new edition of Jane Marshall's translation, revised by Thomas R. Beyer, Jr, with an Introduction by Owen Barfield (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1985).

Justification of the Good, a translation by Natalie Duddington (London, 1918); French translation: *La Justification du Bien*.

Plato, a translation by Richard Gill of Solovyov's *The Drama of Plato's Life* (*Zhiznennaya drama Platona*), with a Foreword by Janko Lavrin (London, 1935).

The Drama of Plato's Life, a new edition, with an Introduction by Wilhelm Schneider (1980), (Edinburgh, 'Helios Fountain').

War, Progress and the End of History (including A Short Story about Antichrist) – Three Discussions, a translation by Alexander Bakshy of Solovyov's *Three Conversations* (London, 1915); the French translation appeared under the title *Trois Entretiens sur la Guerre, la Morale et la Religion* (Paris, 1916).

The Antichrist, a translation by W. J. Barnes and H. H. Haynes of Solovyov's *A Short Story about Antichrist* (*Kratkaya povest' ob antikhriste*), (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1982).

Ubermensch und Antichrist – Uber das Ende der Weltgeschichte, a translation by Ludolf Mueller, (Freiburg: Herder Bücherei, 1958). As well as writing about Solovyov's philosophy and being associated with the publication of the Collected Works in German, Ludolf Mueller also issued separate translations of *A Short Story about Antichrist*, as noted here, and of *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* (*Die geistlichen Grundlagen des Lebens*, Freiburg, 1957).

Vladimir Soloviev – Introduction et Choix de Textes, a French anthology compiled by J. B. Séverac (1910).

A Solovyov Anthology, arranged by Simeon L. Frank, with translations by Natalie Duddington (London, 1950).

O evreyskom narode (stikhi, pis'ma), edited by M. Weinstein (Jerusalem, 1987).

MAJOR STUDIES OF SOLOVYOV'S LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

Works in Russian

Boris N. Chicherin, *Mistitsizm v nauke* (an analysis of Solovyov's *A Critique of Abstract Principles*), (Moscow, 1880).

S. M. Luk'yanov, *O Vl. S. Solovyove v ego molodye gody, (Materialy k biografii Solovyova)*, 3 vols, (Petrograd, 1916–21).

Konstantin Mochulsky. *Vladimir Solovyov – Zhizn' i uchenie* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1936, second edition 1951).

Ernest L. Radlov, *V. S. Solovyov – Zhizn' i uchenie*, (Petersburg: *Tip. 'Obrazovanie'*, 1913).

Sergey M. Solovyov, *Zhizn' i tvorcheskaya evolyutsiya Vladimira Solovyova*, written in 1923, and published in 1977 (Brussels, *Izdatel'stvo "Zhizn' s Bogom", Foyer Oriental Chrétien*). The manuscript of this work is held in the Central State Archive of Literature and Art (TSGALI), Moscow, *Fond* 475 Sergey M. Solovyov, *Op.*1, *ed.khr.* 17 and 18.

Prince Evgeniy Trubetskoy, *Mirosozertsanie Vladimira Solovyova*, 2 vols, (Moscow, *Tip. A. Mamontov*, 1913).

Vasiliy L. Velichko, *Vladimir Solovyov – Zhizn' i tvoreniya* (Petersburg, 1902).

In addition to these works there are five Soviet dissertations in Russian on aspects of Solovyov's philosophy. Their authors and dates are as follows: S. T. Baranov (Rostov, 1974), G. K. Bushurov (Leningrad, 1973), E. P. Ryshkov (Moscow, 1968), V. V. Spirov (Moscow, 1969) and Yu. D. Turenko (Moscow, 1971). The two non-Russian dissertations on Solovyov (whose bibliographies I consulted) are by A. T. Bakradze (Tbilisi, 1972) and Marius A. B. Shlegeris (Vilnius, 1973). All these dissertations are available at the Lenin State Library in Moscow.

Works in Other Languages

Paul M. Allen, *Vladimir Soloviev: Russian Mystic*, (Blauvelt, New York: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1978).

Samuel Cioran, *Vladimir Soloviev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia* (Canada, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977).

Helmut Dahm, *Vladimir Solov'ev und Max Scheler – Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Phänomenologie im Versuch einer vergleichenden Interpretation* (Switzerland: University of Fribourg, 'Sovietica' Series no. 34, 1975). Kathleen Wright has translated this work into English; the title and publisher are as follows: *Vladimir Solovyev and Max Scheler: Attempt at a Comparative Interpretation – A Contribution to the History of Phenomenology* (USA/Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Co.).

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Armin Knigge, *Die Lyrik Vl. Solovievs und ihre Nachwirkung bei a. Belyj und A. Blok* (Dissertation), (Germany: University of Kiel, 1972).
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Friedrich Muckermann, S. J., *Wladimir Solowiew: Zur Begegnung zwischen Russland und dem Abendland*, (Switzerland: Olten, 1945).
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Ludolf Mueller [Müller], *Solovjev und der Protestantismus*; this work also includes Ludolf Mueller's *'Vladimir Solovjev und das Judentum'* (pp. 125–43) and an Appendix by Professor Wladimir Szylkarski [Šilkarskis], *Solovjew und die Una Sancta der Zukunft* (pp. 145–81); (Freiburg, 1951).
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John Palan, *The Theory of Religious Knowledge of Vladimir Soloviev, D.Phil.* thesis, Oxford, 1976.
A. Paplauskas-Ramunas, *Dialogue entre Rome et Moscou.Vladimir Soloviev, port-parole du mouvement oecuménique en Russie* (University of Ottowa, 1966).
Msgr Jean Rupp, *Message ecclésial de Solowiew. Présage et illustration de Vatican II* (Paris/Brussels, 1974).
G. Sacke, *W. S. Solowjews Geschichtsphilosophie – Ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik der russischen Weltanschauung*, (Berlin/Königsberg, *Quellen und Aufsätze zur russischen Geschichte, Band* 9, 1929).
Joseph Schneuwly, *Das Schamgefühl in Wladimir Solovieffs "Rechtfertigung des Guten"*, (a doctoral thesis for the University of Freiburg, 1954).
F. A. Steppuhn [Stepun], *Wladimir Ssolowjew*, Inaug. dissertation, (Univ. Heidelberg, publ. in Leipzig, 1910).
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Dmitry Stremoukhov [Stremooukhoff], *Vladimir Soloviev et son Oeuvre Messianique*, (University of Strasbourg, 1935). This work has been translated into English by Elizabeth Meyendorff, *Vladimir Soloviev and His Messianic Work* (Massachusetts, Belmont: Nordland Books, 1980).
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Vladimir Ern, '*Gnoseologiya V. S. Solovyova*' in *Sbornik perviy. O Vladimire Solovyove*, (1911), pp. 129–204. Ern also provides a bibliography of works by and about Solovyov, covering the period 1873–1911, see pp. 207–22 of this collection.

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F. B. Getz, '*Ob otnoshenii Vl. S. Solovyova k evreyskomu voprosu*', an appendix to the Berlin edition of Solovyov's *Talmud* (two articles on Judaism), (published in 1925).

G. Gjetsaa, "*Neopublikovannaya rech' Vladimira Solovyova o Fyodore Dostoevskom*", *Scando-Slavica*, 1985, vol. 31, pp. 109–16. I am grateful to Professor Gjetsaa for bringing this item to my attention.

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G. A. Rachinsky, '*Vzglyad V. S. Solovyova na krasotu*' in *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, 1901, no. 1, pp. 130–7.

Ernest L. Radlov, '*Mistitsizm V. Solovyova*', in *Vestnik Evropy*, Nov. 1905.

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Lev Shestov, '*Umozrenie i apokalipsis*' (1927), in his *Umozrenie i otkrovenie* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1964) pp. 25–91. This article was initially published *in Sovremennye Zapiski*, 1927/1928, nos 33 and 34.
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I have not included articles that form part of polemical disputes between Solovyov and other figures (such as I. Aksakov, B. N. Chicherin, K. D. Kavelin, A. A. Kireyev, V. Lesevich and N. N. Strakhov), nor the spate of articles concerning Solovyov's alleged conversion to Roman Catholicism that were published in *Russkoe Slovo* in 1910.

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Index

'About the Schism in the Russian Nation and Society', 202n22
Absolute, the, 31, 32, 43, 63, 217
action, 13
  and contemplation, 5, 6, 37, 146–7, 181, 195n6, 196n25, 217n43, 218n16
  active spirituality, xi, 37, 140, 146–7, 201n1
alienation, 31, 47, 54, 188, 191, 218n17
All-Unity, 31, 33, 62–7, 209n9
Allen, P. M., 16, 197n6
analogy, 10, 11, 14
Antichrist, the, 27, 94, 172, 210n27
apocalypse, the, 27, 29, 94–5
Arendt, H., ix, 149
asceticism, 57, 59, 72, 110, 115, 120, 124, 140, 184
  and moral preparation, 3–4
atheism, x
Augustine, St., ix, 132, 216n14
awareness
  see self-awareness

Bely, A., xi, 200n2
Bennett, C. A., 3, 4, 195ns2–4
Berdyaev, N. A., viii, 35, 179
  The Meaning of History, 35, 68, 201n13, 206n69, 207n90
Blok, A. A., xi
bodhisattvahood, 222n25
Boehme, J., 138
Book of Wisdom (of the Old Testament), 108
Bowes, P., 10, 11, 14, 195n16, 213n135
Brahman, 11, 13–14
Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopaedia, S's articles for the *B-E E*, 49, 75, 126, 146
Brothers Karamazov, 21, 189, 192, 198n25
  see also Karamazov
Buddhism, 8, 34, 43, 44, 63, 115–23, 181, 213ns131–3, 222n25
  see also dualism
Bulgakov, S. N., 179
Byzantinism and Russia, 52, 95, 102, 115, 128, 153, 154, 158, 160, 170, 171, 173, 175, 176, 181, 223n29, 224ns37, 41
Byzantium, 52, 153, 154, 156–8, 161, 173, 174, 177, 178

Cabbala, the, 191
Catholicism
  see Roman Catholic Church
censorship, viii, 25, 209n144
chaos, 67, 90
China, 27, 35
China and Europe, 102, 159, 161, 162–70, 172, 173, 176, 177, 178, 181, 201n15, 221n5, 224n55
Christ, 3, 5, 30, 39, 43, 47, 114, 180, 182, 205ns31, 35–6, 208n115, 220n55
Christian
  culture, 69
  love, 39, 41, 52, 54, 61
  model of government, 41, 69–70 (*see also* theocracy)
  social ideal, 27, 31, 41, 142, 159
  S's conception of C. culture, viii, 141–58, 218–21ns1–64
  threat to C. culture, 26, 161, 172–3, 175–7
Christianity, viii, 29, 33, 34, 39, 41, 43, 47, 78, 83, 87, 113, 116, 126, 131, 134, 151, 152, 154, 157, 172, 175, 176–7, 180, 181, 182, 184, 187
Chrysostom, St. John, 154
Chulkov, G. I., 16, 196n4
Church Fathers, the, 19, 33
church–state relations, 21–2, 26, 96–7, 126, 129
  see also theocracy

Churches, reconciliation of, x, 23, 24, 26, 55, 86
community, 41, 42, 52, 61, 77, 125, 129, 178, 187, 190, 192, 193
Comte, A., 29–30, 200n10, 211n48
'Concerning the Last Events', 223n29
Confucianism, 173, 221n6
Confucius, 162
conscience, 80, 84, 135–6, 139
contemplation, 6, 100, 140
  and action, 5, 6, 37, 146–7, 181, 195n6, 196n25, 217ns32, 43, 218n16
  contemplative spirituality, xi, 35–7, 147, 185, 201n1
  Conze, E., 7, 8, 195n7
  Coomaraswamy, A. K., xi, 34, 36, 79, 200n11, 208n108, 216n14
  cosmology, 2, 28–9, 34
  traditional cosmology, 2, 34–5
Crisis of Western Philosophy, The, 19, 31, 32, 44, 50, 99, 100, 101, 138, 179, 192, 198n21, 202ns18–19
Critique of Abstract Principles, A, 22, 32, 47, 99, 100, 200n5, 202n27, 203n37, 215n7

Danilevsky, N. Ya., 23, 198n30
Dasgupta, S., 12, 13, 196n23
detachment, 6, 37
  ideal of, 5
Dionysius the Areopagite, 90, 209n7
discord, 77, 191
divine purpose (*bozhestvenniy zamysel*), 67–70, 74, 76–7
Divine Sophia (Wisdom)
  see Sophia
  Dostoevskaya, A. G., 21, 22, 198ns25, 27
  Dostoevsky, F. M., xi, 21, 22, 27, 72, 85, 150, 179, 184, 185–93, 198ns24–5, 27
  see also 'Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov', *Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky*
Drama of Plato's Life, The, viii, 26, 142, 143–6, 149, 156, 157, 159, 160, 161, 165, 178, 181, 215n2, 218n6
  see also Plato
dualism, 57, 104
  absolute, 43–4
  Buddhist, 44, 63
  Hindu, 44
  Islamic, 43, 70
  Platonic, 43–4, 143, 145, 157
  Zoroastrian, 43, 70

Eckhart, Meister, 6, 12, 13, 36
Empiricism, 19, 33, 44, 98–9, 100, 101, 180
epistemology, 47, 49, 50, 51, 98
evil, 26, 27, 29, 47, 66, 75, 88, 94, 95, 96, 98, 124, 132–3, 141, 147, 148, 150, 187, 188, 191
  non-resistance to, *see* Tolstoy, Count L. N.
evolution, 33, 73, 179
exclusive views, 42, 45, 46–7, 49–50, 51, 63, 70, 99, 121–2
  critique of, 42–7, 51, 64
  Deism (as example of), 42–3, 64
  Pantheism (as example of), 42–3, 64

faith, 48, 49, 100, 109, 130, 136, 148, 150, 183, 187, 188, 217n32
Florensky, P. A., 179
Frank, S. L., 179
freedom, 21, 31, 33, 36, 39, 41, 42, 45, 47, 54, 61, 68, 74–7, 83, 89, 103, 109, 124, 180, 184, 188, 207n90, 215n7
  of will, 31, 132–3, 216ns13, 14
'Fyodor Dostoevsky and Vladimir Solovyov', 185–93

Gandhi, Mahatma, 149
Getz, F. B., 108, 109, 113, 212ns86, 89, 108
Gibson, A. Boyce, 201n1
Gnosticism, 34, 56
God, 13, 14, 31, 36, 42, 43
  attributes of, 11–14
  immanence of, 42–3, 65, 70, 104
  transcendence of, 42–3, 65, 70, 104

see also Absolute, the
Godmanhood, 43, 54, 70–2, 113–14, 176
see also Lectures on Godmanhood
Good, the, 26, 75, 88–93, 98, 124, 130–3, 144, 150, 187, 191, 209n7
belief in triumph of, 48, 61, 62, 84, 88, 183, 188, 191
G., Truth and Beauty, 66, 67, 92
see also Justification of the Good
Gorodetsky, N. D., 220n37
government
Christian models of, 41, 70, 82–3
pagan models of, 70, 82–3
see also theocracy
Grand Inquisitor, the, 27, 61, 94, 193, 210n27
Great Controversy and Christian Politics, The, 102, 113–5, 176, 177, 180, 202ns15, 20, 26, 206n78, 212n110, 217n43
Gregory Nazianzen, 137
Gregory of Nyssa, 137, 203n2

Hackel, S., 192
harmony, 20, 47–9, 51, 53, 67
Hartmann, E. von, 32, 99
Hayner, P. C., 75, 203n29, 207ns89, 91–2, 209n4
Hegel, G. W. F., 29, 44, 45, 138, 172
d'Herbigny, Msgr M., 16, 196n2
heresies, Christian, 114, 212n110
High Priest, the, 79–86, 126, 129, 182, 208n115
Hinduism, 34, 35, 43, 44, 68, 115, 118
see also dualism
historical process, the, 47, 53, 58, 64, 67–72, 132, 147
history, 27, 29, 35, 47, 53–4, 61, 67, 74, 75, 89, 90, 113, 157, 188
History and Future of Theocracy, The, 24, 30, 78, 79, 81, 85, 86, 88, 97, 102, 108–9, 124, 126, 137, 181, 183, 188, 206n68, 207n82, 101–4, 208ns109, 112–14, 116–19, 126–30, 133–7, 209ns139–42, 214ns144–8, 220n58
History of Christian Spirituality, 5, 195n5, 196n17
History of Indian Philosophy, 12, 196n23
History of Russian Philosophy, 16, 32, 196n3, 200n8
Huegel, F. von, ix, 203n8
Huxley, A., 149

'Idea of Humanity according to Auguste Comte, The', 200n10, 211n48
see also Comte, A
idealism, 72, 143
impenetrability, 31–2, 55–6
Incarnation, 43, 47, 54, 57, 64, 71, 72–3, 77, 110, 180
integral knowledge, 32, 50
see also Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge, The
intelligentsia, 19, 23, 29, 30
Islām, 29, 34, 43, 70, 78, 113–15, 152, 176–7, 180, 212n110
see also dualism
Izutsu, T., 221n10

Jews, S's defence of the, 27
Judaism, 29, 34, 78, 105–13, 123, 124, 181–2
Jewish spirituality, 58, 105, 126, 129, 137, 181–2
see also messianism, Jewish theocracy
Judaism and the Christian Question, 58–9, 80, 102, 105, 107–9, 126, 136, 157, 176, 180–1, 183, 203n34, 204ns12, 26, 27, 205ns29, 39, 206ns77, 79, 80, 207n88, 208ns107, 110–12, 115, 120–5, 131, 211ns78, 82, 212ns83–5, 87–8, 91–4
Justification of the Good, 11, 26, 40, 67, 91, 124, 131–5, 138, 160, 170, 183, 202ns8, 17, 207n87, 209ns3, 6, 8, 14, 210n32, 213n125, 214n149, 215n7, 216ns8–10, 12, 15–22, 217ns23–8, 38–9

Kant, I, 32, 40, 217n32
Karamazov
Alyosha, 21

Ivan, 21–2, 192
Khitrovo, S. P., 25
Khomyakov, A. S., 23, 101, 103
King, Dr Martin Luther, 149
King, the, 79–86, 126, 129, 182, 208n115
Kingdom of God, the, 54–5, 64, 72, 77, 93, 96, 98, 125, 126, 147, 182, 188, 207n90, 222n25
Kireyev, A. A., 151, 219n32
Kireyevsky, I. V., 23
Klyuchevsky, V. O., 151, 219n33
Koni, A. F., 25, 199ns32, 42, 219n25

La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle, 24, 86, 92, 137, 139, 199n37, 202ns9, 10, 206n67, 207ns87, 98, 209ns10, 20, 214n150, 217n40
language
  deficiencies of, 2, 9–14
  mystics' use of, 9–14, 37
  responsible use of, 37
Lao-Tzu, 162–6, 168, 170, 181, 221n10, 222n25
Leclercq, J., 5, 12, 195n5, 196n18
Lectures on Godmanhood, 21, 31, 42, 49, 55, 56, 64, 66, 90, 102, 107, 110, 115, 118, 121, 124, 139, 180, 183, 201n3, 202ns11–14, 16, 17, 203n35, 204ns17, 19, 206ns74, 79, 207ns88, 96, 99, 100, 209n4, 17–19, 210n22, 211ns77, 81, 212n120, 213ns126–30, 214n143, 222ns19–24
  see also Godmanhood
Leontyev, K. N., 219n34
Leskov, N. S., 199n35
Levitsky, S. A., 191
L'Idée russe, 24, 199n36
Lopatin, L. M., 18, 223n35
Lossky, N. O., 16, 32, 196n3, 200n8
Lossky, V. N., 12, 13, 57, 60, 196ns19–22, 24
  Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, 57, 60, 196ns19, 24, 204n21, 205ns31–4, 218n44
  Théologie Négative et Connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart, 12
love, 25, 26, 29, 30–1, 36, 39, 41, 52, 150, 201n1
  active, 39, 150, 187, 192, 193, 201n1
  Christian, 39, 52, 54, 61
  see also Meaning of Love, The
Luk'yanov, S. M., 100–1, 148, 171, 197n15, 198ns20, 22, 29, 211ns49, 50, 219ns20–2, 223n31

Mahadevan, T. M. P., 13
Mahommed, his Life and Religious Teaching, 176, 212n109, 224n49
Maistre, J. de, 126, 214n155
Masaryk, T. G., 16, 136, 137, 196n4, 197n5, 217ns32, 34
messianism, 127, 137, 188, 214n158
  Jewish, 137
  Russian, 127
Maxim the Confessor, 137
Meaning of Love, The, 26, 201n1
'men of the Sixties' (*shestidesyatniki*), 18
Merton, T., 36
metaphysics, 99
methodology, x–xi, 1–15, 195–6ns1–25
  S's methodology, 32–4, 49–50, 99–101, 138, 142, 156–7, 159, 161, 173, 177–9, 181–2
Milosz, C., 194, 209n21, 210n28
Minz, Z. G., 199n49, 220n55
Mochulsky, K. V., ix, 16, 17, 19, 20, 32, 196n1, 198ns17, 20, 22, 199ns49, 50, 200n2
monotheism, 104
Moscow Theological Academy (at Sergiev-Posad), 19
motivation, 2, 3–7
Mount Athos, 140
multiplicity, 76, 78
Murdoch, I., xvi, 36, 37, 201ns17, 18
Murti, T. R. V., 121, 122, 213ns132–4, 214ns138–40, 215n6, 222n25
mystical apprehension, 1, 14, 87, 98–102, 136
mystical experience, 1–2, 9, 17, 20, 47–8, 57, 60, 61–2, 87, 90–1, 183
mystical thought, 1–15
mysticism, 1, 14, 100–2, 180, 189–90

Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis, 195n1
'Mythological Process in Ancient Paganism, The', 102, 104–5, 115

Nāgārjuna, 121, 122, 213ns132, 136
National Question in Russia, The, 23, 160, 198ns30–1, 214n157
nationalism, 23, 160, 174
Neo-Platonism, 87
New testament, the, 39, 54, 71, 92, 98, 110, 113, 124, 126, 131, 137, 157, 160, 179, 180, 184, 193
Newman, Cardinal J., ix, 16, 196n2
non-resistance to evil, doctrine of *see* Tolstoy, Count L. N.
Numinous, the, 9, 10

Old Believers, 46
Old Testament, the, 71, 93, 105, 110, 127, 137
'On Clerical Power in Russia', 97, 219n25
On the Decline of the Mediaeval Worldview, 56, 142, 150–60, 161, 170, 176, 178, 181, 204ns20, 28, 221ns261, 62, 223n27
Optina Pustyn', 21, 198n25
Origen, ix, 68
original sin, 56, 89
Otto, R., 9–10, 195ns12–15

Palan, J., 202n18
Pan-Unity
  see All-Unity
  'Panmongolism', 95, 128, 154, 158, 160, 161, 173–5, 177, 183
  English translation of, 194
perfectibility, 39, 51–4, 61, 69, 75, 92, 132, 150, 154, 160, 173, 184, 203n1, 220n53
  ideal of, 61, 184
Peter the Great, ix, 170–1, 185, 223n29
Petrine reforms, the, 33, 223n29
philosopher, the, 141, 145–6, 147, 149, 159–60, 183
Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge, The, 22, 32, 47, 67, 90, 91, 99, 100, 101, 200n9, 202n27, 203n36, 209ns12–13, 211n47, 215ns3–5, 217n29
philosophy, 19, 26, 28, 32, 42, 44–5, 49–50, 90–1, 100, 138, 179, 191–2, 193
piety, 125, 133–6, 138–9
pity, 125, 133–6, 138–9, 216n17
Plato, 34, 43–4, 117, 141, 143–7, 157, 159, 160, 217n32, 218ns6, 14
  see also Drama of Plato's Life, The
Platonism, 43–4, 68, 87, 116, 145
  see also dualism
plenitude of being (*polnota bytiya*), 31, 65, 77, 93, 124, 131
polytheism, 104
Positivism, 18, 19, 21, 29, 33, 99–101
poverty of spirit, ideal of, 5, 6
predetermination, 216n13
prophecy, 85, 187, 188
Prophet, the, 49, 62, 79–81, 83–6, 126, 129, 182, 183, 188, 191, 208n115
  prophetic vocation, the, 47–9, 85
  S. as prophet, 85
Protestantism, 45–6, 84, 202n25
Prutskov, N., 210n27
Pypin, A. N., 127

quietism, xi, 37, 44, 140, 145–6, 192, 201n1

Radlov, E. L., ix, 32, 90, 182, 189, 197n16, 198n24, 204ns15–16, 216ns11, 13
Ramanan, K. V., 121–2, 213ns132, 136, 137
Rationalism, 33, 44, 98–9, 101, 180
reason, 44, 136–7, 138
  'Scripture and Reason: A Dual Allegiance', 130–40
receptivity, 32, 56, 91–2, 132, 136
religion, 11, 14, 32, 33, 91, 105, 184
  religions, classification of, 34, 88, 102–24, 128, 181
religious thought
  Indian, 44, 115–24, 181–2
  Judaic, *see* Judaism; *Judaism and the Christian Question*
  Russian 179

Remizov, A. M., 16, 196n4, 199n44
Resurrection, the, 96, 220n55
  resurrection, 150
revelation, 2, 87, 180
Roman Catholic Church, ix, x, 23, 24, 26, 45, 46, 214n156, 217n43
Romanova, E. (S's cousin), 19, 25, 138, 199n43
Rozanov, V. V., 18, 148, 158, 175, 186, 197n13, 219n23, 221n64, 224n43
Russian Orthodox Church, the, x, 17, 23, 24, 26, 30, 46, 97, 140, 176, 214n156

sacred corporeality (*svyataya telesnost'*), 53, 55–9, 109–10, 136, 137, 182, 212n90
Sage, the (Taoist ideal of), 163–7
  see also Taoism
'Saint Vladimir et l'Etat Chrétien', 215n164
salvation, universal, 32, 33, 39, 53, 61, 65, 71, 79, 134, 169, 183, 215n7, 222n25
Scheler, M., ix
Schelling, F. W. J. von, 29, 47, 68, 74–7, 89, 103, 217n31
  see also Hayner, P. C., on Schelling
Schism, the (*Raskol*)
  see Old Believers
Schneuwly, J., 216n18
Schopenhauer, A., 32, 76, 95, 99, 134, 135, 138, 178
science, 11, 14, 32, 49, 50, 110, 138, 179
Selevina, E.
  see Romanova, E.
self-assertion, 56, 72, 74–7, 94, 188, 190, 218n17
  of the Jews, 106–8
self-awareness, 32, 53, 61, 73, 193
self-denial, 72, 75, 108, 140, 188, 207n84
  Russia's, 128, 173–4, 215n164
self-transcendence, 5
selfhood, 7–8, 106–7
Setnitsky, N., 175–6, 221n1, 224ns44–5, 47
shame, 124–5, 133–6, 138–9
Shcherbatsky, T. I., 118, 122, 123, 213ns131–2, 214ns141–2
Shestov, L., 21, 92–3, 136–7, 139, 189, 198n24, 209n21
'Short Story about Antichrist, A', 27, 94, 188, 210n27
Skovoroda, G. S., 17, 197n10
Slavophiles, ix, 23, 45, 101, 127, 158, 160, 172, 185
Slavophilism, 128, 214n158
sobornost'
  see community
Socrates, 143–5, 160, 165–6
Sollogub, F. L., 219ns20–2
Solovieff
  see Solovyov
Soloviev
  see Solovyov
Solovyov in Thebaïd, 148, 219ns20–2
Solovyov, Mikhail Sergeyevich (brother), 26, 145
Solovyov, Mikhail Vasil'evich (grandfather), 17
Solovyov, Sergey Mikhailovich (the elder; VS's father; historian), 17, 19, 170–2, 197n7, 223ns29, 33, 34
Solovyov, Sergey Mikhailovich (the younger; VS's nephew and biographer; poet), ix, 16, 21, 27, 32, 171, 189, 196n1, 197ns8–9, 14, 198ns22, 24, 29, 199ns41, 43, 46, 50, 223ns28, 30, 35
Solovyov, Vladimir Sergeyevich
  central teachings, 39–86
  life and career, 16–27
  mystical visions, 17, 20, 47, 48, 61–2, 65–6, 183
  nihilist phase, 18
Solovyov, Vsevolod Sergeyevich (brother), 25, 171–2
Solovyova, Poliksena Vladimirovna (mother), 17
'Some Words in Defence of Peter the Great', 170, 223n29
Sophia, the Divine, xi

as the World Soul, 75–8, 136
S's mystical visions of, 17, 20, 47–8, 61–2, 65, 183
soteriology, 2, 7–8, 14
Spinoza, B., 18, 211n69
spiritual aspiration, 51–2, 65, 193
spiritual attainment, ideal of, 2, 34, 35
spiritual community, 31, 52, 61, 78–9, 97, 105, 125, 129, 131, 182, 183, 190, 206n75
see also community, theocracy
Spiritual Foundations of Life, The, viii, 56, 57, 58, 69, 75, 93, 125, 132, 136, 138, 183, 191, 200n7, 201ns2–3, 5, 203ns28, 30, 204ns10–11, 18, 22–5, 205n36, 206n68, 73, 207ns93–4, 209n5, 213n125, 218n45
spiritualisation (*odukhotvorenie*), 32, 53, 61, 64, 72–4, 147
spiritualism, 20, 198n22
Steiner, G., 9, 195n10
Sternkopf, J., 223n29
Stremooukhoff
see Stremoukhov
Stremoukhov, D., ix, 127, 158, 172, 214n158, 221n63, 223n33
Strossmayer, Archbishop, 24, 128
suffering, consciousness of, 39–40, 215n6
Sutherland, S., 192
symbolism, religious, 8, 31, 69
synthesis (of knowledge), 32–3, 49–50, 100, 138, 179
'Talmud and the Newest Polemical Literature about it, The', 58, 102, 111, 181, 203ns3, 4, 212ns95–107, 214n151, 220ns48–50
Tao Te Ching, 163–5, 221n10
see also Lao-Tzu, Taoism
Taoism, 118, 162–7, 170, 173, 221n10
Teilhard de Chardin, P., ix, 73
theocracy, 49, 55, 62, 67, 69, 71, 78–86, 105, 124–9, 141, 182
Judaic model of, 78
see also community, *History and Future of Theocracy, The*
theology, 19, 45, 49–50, 100, 193
Negative, 11–14, 36, 209n7
Positive, 11–14
Theoretical Philosophy, 138, 215n1, 217ns37, 42
theosophy, 67
theurgy, 67
Third Rome, ideal of the, 128, 158, 161, 174–5, 224n40
Three Conversations, 26, 94, 95, 98, 127, 160, 170, 172, 210ns39, 40
'Three Forces', 113–15, 206n75, 214n150
'Three Meetings', 17, 48, 62, 197n11, 203n31, 205n38
Three Speeches in Memory of F. M. Dostoevsky, 141, 149, 180, 183, 187, 203n5, 204n13, 209n2
Tolstoy, Count L. N., ix, 21, 95–8, 149, 154–5, 199ns35, 49, 210ns33, 37, 219n26, 220ns54, 55, 223n26
doctrine of non-resistance to evil, 26–7, 98
Torah, 111
Transfiguration of Christ, 140, 205ns31, 35
transfiguration (*preobrazovanie*), 53, 59–62, 64, 72, 93, 134, 140, 147, 210n23
Trinity, the Holy, 66, 92, 93, 139, 183
Trubetskoy, Prince E. N., ix, 127, 128, 158, 201n7, 205n36, 214ns159–62, 215n163
Tsertelev, Prince D. N., 20
Tsinger, V. Ya., 101

Vasil'ev, N., 97, 210n37
Vedic religion, 104–5, 115
Velichko, V. L., 19, 198n19
Via Illuminativa, 3
Via Purgativa, 3
Via Unitiva, 3

Walicki, A., 204n14
Wembris, B., 216n10
Werner, K., 28, 195ns1, 11, 200n1
West European philosophies, 18, 32

Westernisers, 23, 160
wholeness (*tsel'nost'*)
  of man, 16, 33, 93
  of views (comprehensiveness), 33, 42
Williams, R., 68, 206n72
World Soul, the
  Schopenhauer's view of, 76
  otherwise see Sophia, the Divine

Yanzhul, I. I., 19

Zernov, N. M., ix, 224n40
Zoroastrianism, 43, 70
  see also dualism
Zosima, 22, 189, 191–3